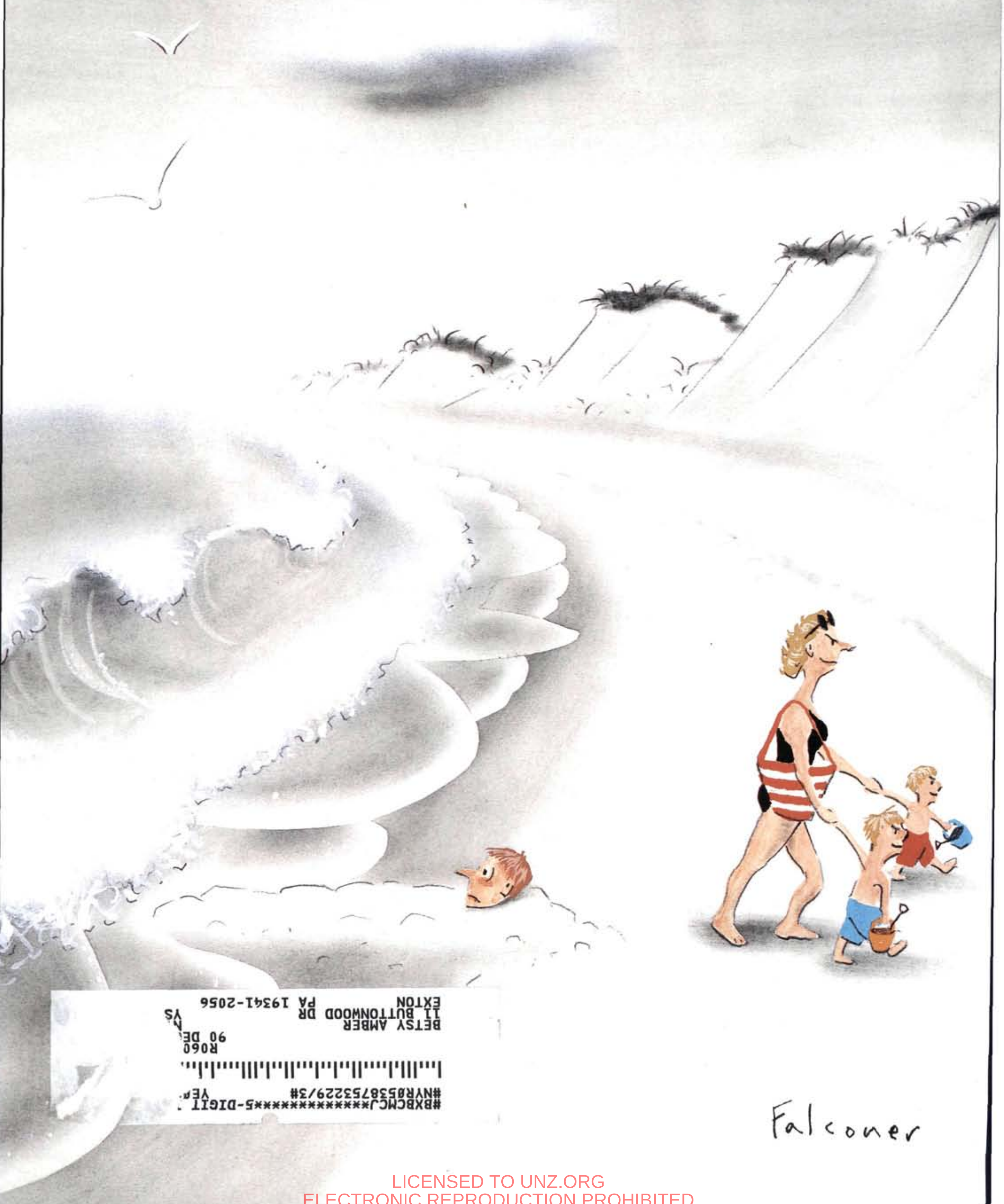
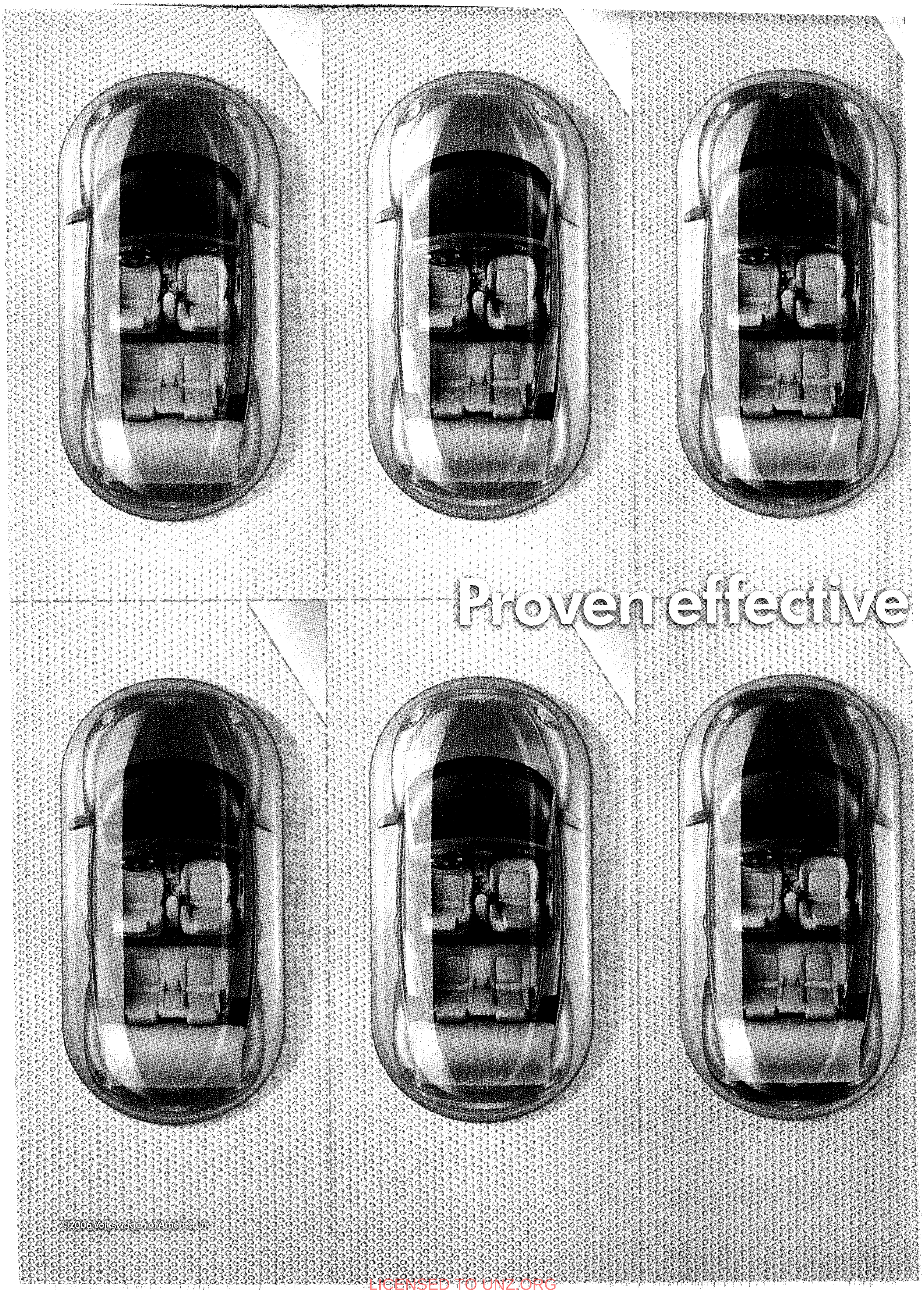
PRICE $3.99

AUG. 28, 2006

THE NEW YORKER



#BXBCMCJ************5-DIGIT .
#NYR0538753229/3# YEA
R060
90 DE
BETSY AMBER
11 BUTTONWOOD DR
EXTON PA 19341-2056



Proven effective

©2006 Volkswagen of America, Inc.

against negativity.
Dare to be happy.

The New York Times Bestseller

The greatest story never told.

In this unforgettable new thriller, an ancient prophecy predicts the arrival of a woman who is destined to unearth Mary Magdalene's lost gospel. And one journalist soon finds herself in a dangerous world of people who will fight to the death to keep—or destroy—one of the world's most powerful secrets.

"Highly provocative... keenly imagined." —USA TODAY

"Riveting." —People

"A page-turning debut...highly recommended." —Library Journal

Audiobook also available on CD and for download.

www.TheExpectedOne.com
www.simonsays.com

TOUCHSTONE
A Division of Simon & Schuster
A CBS COMPANY

THE NEW YORKER

AUGUST 28, 2006

6 GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN
21 THE TALK OF THE TOWN
Adam Gopnik on Bush and Camus; the air-pollution balloon; Leslie Caron.

Malcolm Gladwell 30 DEPT. OF HUMAN RESOURCES
The Risk Pool
The power of dependency ratios.

George Saunders 36 SHOUTS & MURMURS
Proclamation

John Lahr 38 BACKSTAGE CHRONICLES
Petrified
The nightmare of stagefright.

Sylvia Nasar and David Gruber 44 ANNALS OF MATHEMATICS
Manifold Destiny
Who really solved the Poincaré conjecture?

Richard Ford 58 FICTION
"How Was It to Be Dead?"

THE CRITICS

BOOKS
David Denby 70 *The life and works of Upton Sinclair.*
77 Briefly Noted
Paul Goldberger 78 THE SKY LINE
Daniel Libeskind's Denver Art Museum.
Peter Schjeldahl 80 THE ART WORLD
Napoleon at the Dahesh Museum.
Anthony Lane 82 THE CURRENT CINEMA
"Factotum," "This Film Is Not Yet Rated."

POEMS
Vijay Seshadri 42 "This Morning"
Paul Muldoon 62 "A Hummingbird"
Margaret Atwood 72 "Secrecy"

COVER *"An Incoming Tide," by Ian Falconer* DRAWINGS *P. C. Vey, Kim Warp, Alex Gregory, Carolita Johnson, J. Dator, Bruce Eric Kaplan, David Sipress, Charles Barsotti, Gahan Wilson, Robert Mankoff, Michael Crawford, Roz Chast, Paul Noth,* SPOTS *Richard McGuire*

www.newyorker.com

EVERY FOUR YEARS,
THE WORLD SPEAKS ONE LANGUAGE.
HORSE.

For two weeks, the world's greatest equestrians put personal and national pride on the line at the World Equestrian Games. As the whole world watches, riders represent their country and compete in seven disciplines on the hallowed grounds of Aachen, Germany. In the end, an entire nation has reason to celebrate its champions. **WORLD EQUESTRIAN GAMES, AACHEN, GERMANY – AUGUST 20TH TO SEPTEMBER 3RD, 2006.**

28
MONDAY
ROLEX

OYSTER PERPETUAL DAY-DATE
WWW.ROLEX.COM

ROLEX

FOR AN OFFICIAL ROLEX JEWELER CALL 1-800-367-6539. ROLEX ♛ OYSTER PERPETUAL AND DAY-DATE ARE TRADEMARKS.
NEW YORK

ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

ADVERTISEMENT

on the **town**

BE THE FIRST TO HEAR ABOUT EVENTS, PROMOTIONS, AND SPECIAL OFFERS FROM *NEW YORKER* ADVERTISERS.

GREY GOOSE TOASTS
ICONOCLASTS

Sundance Channel and Grey Goose Entertainment present the second season of ICONOCLASTS, a series of intimate, unpredictable portraits of ground-shakers who have transformed our culture through their passions. Get an inside look at their lives from fellow creative pioneers and discover how their work has raised the bar on excellence.

Premièring in October, ICONOCLASTS, only on Sundance Channel. For more information and details, go to **www.iconoclaststv.com**.

Then look for the special insert in the October issue for a sneak peek at the personalities featured in season two of ICONOCLASTS.

ULTIMATE ICONOCLASTS SWEEPSTAKES
Enter for a chance to win an ultimate *ICONOCLASTS* weekend. This weekend includes a trip for two to attend the series-première event in October. The sweepstakes winner will receive round-trip airfare for two, a two-night stay at a hotel, dinner for two at an acclaimed restaurant, and a $1,000 shopping spree. Pack your bags and get ready to be the toast of the town.

Log on to *www.iconoclaststv.com* to enter and for full official rules.

sundance CHANNEL

GREY GOOSE
ENTERTAINMENT

NO PURCHASE NECESSARY. Starts 12:01 A.M. E.S.T. 7/25/06 and ends 11:59 P.M. E.S.T. 9/15/06, when all entries must be received. Open to legal residents of the 50 United States/D.C. who are 21 years of age or older except employees of Sponsor and entrants who have any interest in an on-sale or off-sale retail alcoholic beverage. Void in California, outside the 50 United States/D.C., and where otherwise prohibited. Odds of winning depend on the number of entries received. Prize ARV: $4,995.00. The Sponsor is CondéNet Inc., 1166 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10036.

Sip Responsibly.

CONTRIBUTORS

Malcolm Gladwell ("The Risk Pool," p. 30) is the author of "The Tipping Point" and "Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking."

Adam Gopnik (Comment, p. 21) has a new book, "Through the Children's Gate: A Home in New York," coming out in the fall.

George Saunders (Shouts & Murmurs, p. 36) is the author of five books, including "In Persuasion Nation," a collection of short stories, which was published in April.

James Surowiecki (The Financial Page, p. 28) writes a regular column on business and finance.

Susan Sheehan (The Talk of the Town, p. 26) has been a staff writer since 1961.

Walton Ford (Sketchbook, p. 50) will have an exhibition of his work, from 1990 to the present, at the Brooklyn Museum, in November.

Sylvia Nasar ("Manifold Destiny," p. 44), the author of "A Beautiful Mind," is working on a book about twentieth-century economic thinkers. David Gruber co-wrote "Aglow in the Dark," which was published earlier this year.

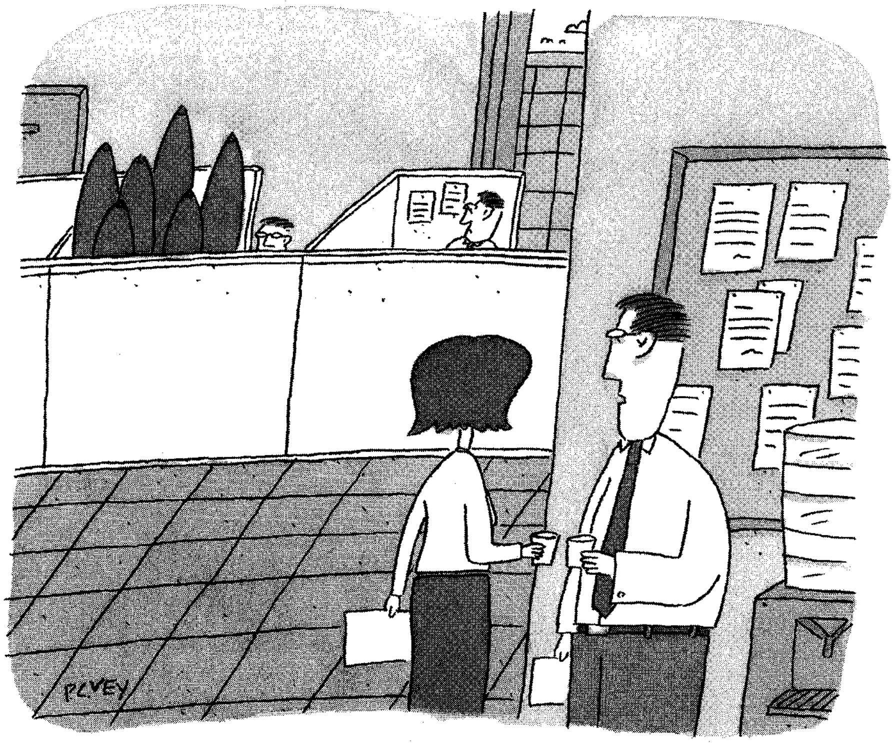
John Lahr ("Petrified," p. 38) is the magazine's senior drama critic. His most recent book is "Honky Tonk Parade: *New Yorker* Profiles of Show People."

Richard Ford (Fiction, p. 58) has a new novel, "The Lay of the Land," coming out in October.

Paul Muldoon (Poem, p. 62) will publish "Horse Latitudes," a collection of poems, and "The End of the Poem," a book of essays, in October.

David Denby (Books, p. 70) is a film critic for the magazine.

Ian Falconer (Cover) is the writer and illustrator of four children's books, including "Olivia Forms a Band." ♦



"I had no idea Howard's arsenal was so big."

THE MAIL

APPRAISING ART

Peter Schjeldahl playfully objects to Ronald S. Lauder's calling his purchase of Gustav Klimt's "Adele Bloch-Bauer I" for the Neue Galerie "our 'Mona Lisa'" (The Art World, July 24th). But the defining characteristic of the "Mona Lisa," in this screen-saver age, may no longer be her mysterious smile. The common approach to viewing a work of art has been permanently altered by Andy Warhol. Today the value of an original may be determined as much by a work's history—in this case, the Nazi's seizure of the portrait and the subsequent struggle to have the work returned to the heirs—and by its ubiquity in popular culture, as by its unique subject, the handling of the paint, or the originality of its form.

Michael Comlish
Brooklyn, N.Y.

LEBANON AND ISRAEL

Jon Lee Anderson quotes Jamil Mroue, the editor of Beirut's English-language newspaper, the *Daily Star*, as commenting, "You get rid of Nasrallah not by destroying his guns but by helping to create a sustainable society" ("The Battle for Lebanon," August 7th & 14th). Since 1990, Lebanon's gross domestic product has steadily increased, while inflation has dramatically declined, and, through Horizon 2000, the country has successfully rebuilt a good deal of its infrastructure. Foreign investment recently reached a billion dollars, and tourism rose to the point where Beirut regained its reputation as the Paris of the Middle East. Over the same period, Hezbollah was elected to ten per cent of the seats in the national parliament, created an independent network of social and cultural institutions, and became a military force capable of engaging the premier power in the region. This suggests an interpretation different from Mr. Mroue's: that the price of self-inflicted blindness in a contract with the Devil is always the blood of the innocent.

Ed Scheiblin
New York City

Anderson describes Samir Kuntar, one of the prisoners whose release Hezbollah has been seeking, as "a Lebanese man . . . who killed an Israeli man and his four-year-old daughter." It should be noted that Kuntar did not run over the two in a traffic accident; he compelled the daughter to watch as he shot her father and then smashed her head in. Perhaps this detail might provide some understanding of why Kuntar has been in prison since 1979 in Israel, a country that does not have the death penalty.

Gerald J. Blidstein
Beersheba, Israel

WIKIPEDIA'S WISDOM

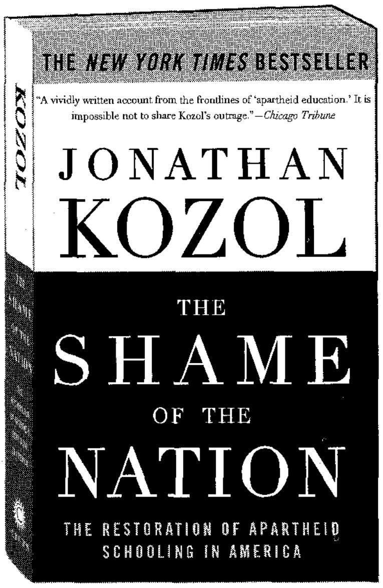
Stacy Schiff stresses error rates in her comparison between Wikipedia and the Encyclopædia Britannica ("Know It All," July 31st). The compelling nature of Wikipedia, however, is due not to its scholarly perfection but to its process. Wikipedia may or may not triumph, if the competition involves building an infallible compilation of earthly knowledge. But it is truly revolutionary that the best, rather than the worst, input from each contributor can be more or less effectively harnessed. The performance of human organizations is often limited by the lowest common denominator: the dimmest mind always seems to be in charge. Building a system that plucks strengths from each individual is quite remarkable. Instead of quibbling over whether Britannica's shelf space is going to be usurped, we ought to consider how our institutions might be improved through a more wiki-like model of participation.

Michael Murray
Oakland, Calif.

•

Letters should be sent with the writer's name, address, and daytime phone number via e-mail to themail@newyorker.com. They can also be faxed to 212-286-5047. Letters may be edited for length and clarity, and may be published in any medium. All letters become the property of The New Yorker and will not be returned; we regret that owing to the volume of correspondence we cannot reply to every letter.

The acclaimed
New York Times bestseller—
NOW IN PAPERBACK


THE NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER
"A vividly written account from the frontlines of 'apartheid education.' It is impossible not to share Kozol's outrage." —Chicago Tribune
KOZOL
JONATHAN
KOZOL
THE
SHAME
OF THE
NATION
THE RESTORATION OF APARTHEID
SCHOOLING IN AMERICA

"A vividly written account from the frontlines of 'apartheid education.'
It is impossible not to share Kozol's outrage."
—*Chicago Tribune*

"A national wake-up call."
—MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN

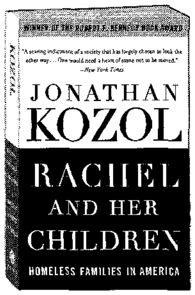
"His outrage ought to infect us."—*Los Angeles Times*

"This book will make your blood boil."
—DAVID GATES, *O, The Oprah Magazine*

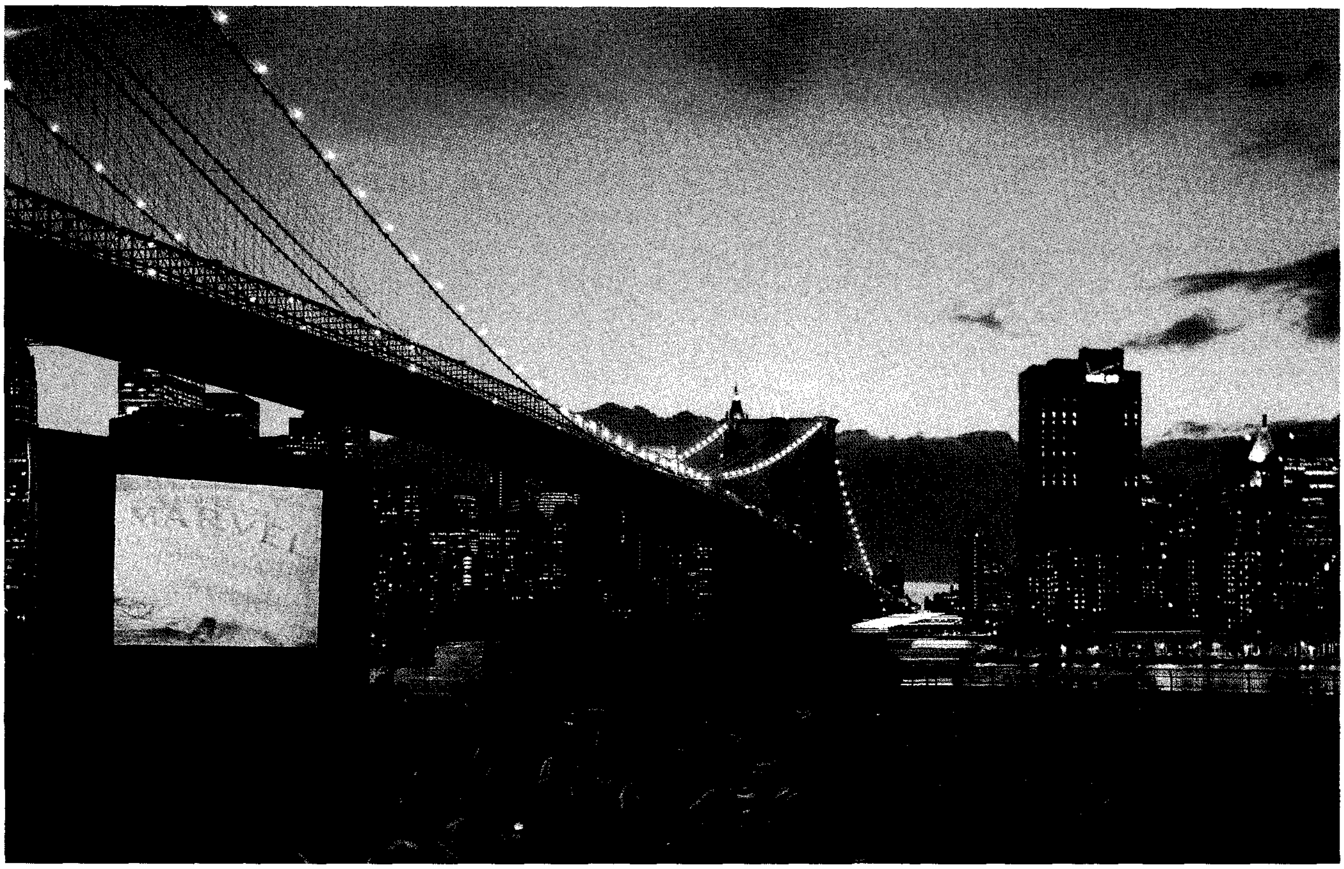
"A call for activism."
—*Washington Post Book World*

Also by
Jonathan Kozol

"A searing indictment of a society that has largely chosen to look the other way."
—*New York Times*



Crown Also available from Random House Audio



GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
27	28	29	23	24	25	26

THIS WEEK

THE THEATRE
STILL FANTASTIC

"The Fantasticks," a musical about two meddling fathers who conspire in a matchmaking endeavor, débuted at the Sullivan Street Playhouse in 1960 and ran for more than seventeen thousand performances, finally closing in 2002. A revival opens this week at the Snapple Theatre Center. (See page 8.)

NIGHT LIFE
OFF THE PAGE

The "Revenge of the Book Eaters" tour, a six-city travelling carnival of musicians, comedians, and writers put together to benefit children's literacy, gets under way this week at the Beacon Theatre. David Byrne, Jon Stewart, Sarah Vowell, and Dave Eggers are among the New York headliners. (See page 9.)

ART
KEEPING A LOOKOUT

The Austrian Cultural Forum's "Landscape in Your Mind" (perhaps the title was more successful in German) is a surprisingly engaging survey of recent painting, photography, and video. The parameters are narrow—all the works are, in one way or another, landscapes, and all are by Austrian artists—but the variety of approaches makes for a thought-provoking show. (See page 11.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
THE REAL THING

If the young Venezuelan conductor Gustavo Dudamel is as talented as his new disk of Beethoven symphonies seems to indicate, then his début with the Boston Symphony Orchestra at Tanglewood should be a major event. Beethoven's First Piano Concerto is on the program. (See page 13.)

MOVIES
BIG-SCREEN JUKEBOX

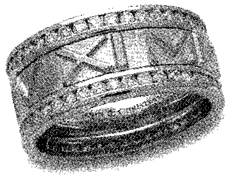
Frank Tashlin, who started out in 1936 directing Porky Pig cartoons, later brought the same hectic wizardry to a score of features. Film Forum opens a mini-retrospective of Tashlin's work with a weeklong run of "The Girl Can't Help It," from 1956, starring Jayne Mansfield in a rock-and-roll world alongside Little Richard, Eddie Cochran, Gene Vincent, Fats Domino, and many others. (See page 18.)

"Movies with a View," at the Brooklyn Bridge. Photograph by Yola Monakhov.

Advertisement

SUMMER SHOWCASE

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT NEW PRODUCTS AND SPECIAL OFFERS FROM *NEW YORKER* ADVERTISERS.

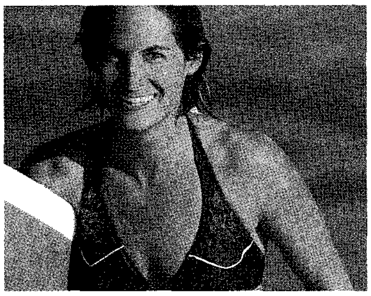


Your anniversary date in Roman numerals
December 11, 1998
XII XI MCMXCVIII

Stunning diamonds set in bands of
gold or platinum. From $3,900.

888.646.6466
www.ringbox.com

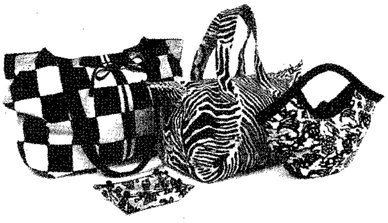
JOHN ⚓ CHRISTIAN
DESIGNERS & CRAFTSMEN



Hip and feminine outside, with a
performance-driven core. Athleta,
outfitting women athletes since 1997.

For a free catalogue, call us toll-free.
888.531.9825
www.athleta.com

ATHLETA



tiverton
trading
company.com

Discover the world of traditional Chinese
blue-and-white cotton fashion accessories.

401.816.0197

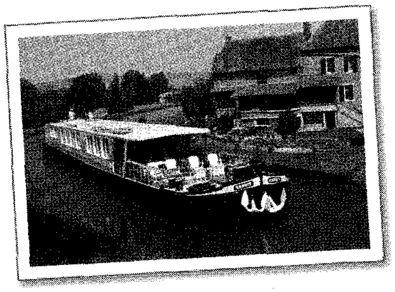
Hike the Swiss and Italian Alps with
popular author/mountaineer Fred Jacobson.
Small groups of active outdoor enthusiasts
who also appreciate high-level creature
comforts. Charming inns, first-class hotels,
breathtaking landscapes. Our 34th year.
800.291.8126 www.alptrails.com

Fred Jacobson
ALPINE TRAILS

RosettaStone
SPANISH

Rosetta Stone® Language Learning Software.
Try a free demo and purchase
risk-free with our six-month
money-back guarantee.
Available in 30 languages.

800.788.5141
www.RosettaStone.com/nys076b



A Unique Experience
Luxury Hotel Barge Cruises

800.222.1236
www.fcwl.com/NYR

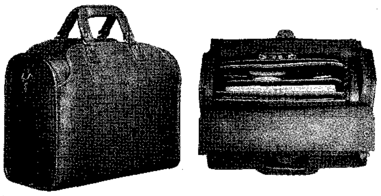
FRENCH COUNTRY WATERWAYS

Duke Diet & *fitness center*

A residential program with medical, nutrition,
fitness, and behavioral-health experts offering
a balanced approach to life-style change for
successful weight loss and improved health.

800.235.3853
www.dukedietcenter.org

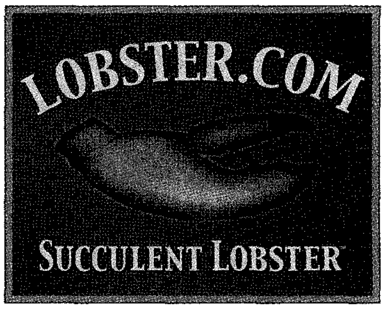
Duke Diet and Fitness Center
DUKE UNIVERSITY HEALTH SYSTEM



We make Glaser travel and leather goods
and custom executive gifts in our San
Francisco studio and sell directly to you.
Please call for our free catalogue.

Call toll-free 800.234.1075
www.glaserdesigns.com

GLASER DESIGNS
SAN FRANCISCO



When you give gift certificates from
Lobster.com, your appreciation extends to
a celebration at the dinner table! Business
gifts don't work much better than that.

Business Gifts With Legs
800.949.1944
LOBSTER.COM

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
GET FRINGED

In 1996, the enterprising John Clancy was the director of the Present Company, a small New York-based theatre group dedicated to exploring avant-gardism. Seeking to expand his work on the margins of the theatre world, Clancy helped establish the New York International Fringe Festival, which remains one of the city's more ridiculous, serious, and surrealist theatrical contrivances. The current festival runs through Aug. 27 and includes works by some two hundred companies, at more than twenty venues, from Union Square to the Henry Street Settlement. This year, the festival has its usual range of high and low, sometimes all at once. Take "Hermanas," for example, Monica Yudovitch's study of Jewish-Mexican sisters living somewhere along the border of hysteria while tending to the demands of a comically overbearing mother. And, if you still haven't had enough of Mario Puzo, there's David Mann's "Corleone: The Shakespearean Godfather." As with most things fringe, genres mix and merge to create the unexpected, the strange, and the beautiful.

—*Hilton Als*

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

THE FANTASTICKS
The world's longest-running musical has returned, after a four-year hiatus. Written and directed by Tom Jones, with music by Harvey Schmidt. Opens Aug. 23. (Snapple Theatre Center, 210 W. 50th St. 212-307-4100.)

SEVEN GUITARS
The first of three August Wilson plays to be produced by the Signature Theatre Company follows seven people struggling in Pittsburgh's Hill District in the late forties. Ruben Santiago-Hudson directs. In previews. Opens Aug. 24. (Peter Norton Space, 555 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529.)

NOW PLAYING

ABSINTHE
Spiegeltent (or "tent of mirrors"), the odd and remarkable venue that has materialized at the former site of the Fulton Fish Market, has its ideal headlining event in this sexy circus for adults. Not only are the performers virtuosic; most of them also have a naughty streak, and some of them wear very little clothing. The show's motley program, which includes a debauched scissor-swallower and a woman who makes handkerchiefs appear from the most provocative places, proves that such stunts can be just as eye-popping writ small as they are under the big top. If you've been thinking of running away to join the circus, go with this one. (Pier 17, South Street Seaport. 212-279-4200.)

THE AMERICAN LIVING ROOM
This festival, presented by HERE Arts Center, showcases dozens of new works that incorporate theatre, dance, puppets, and video. (3LD Arts & Technology Center, 80 Greenwich St. 212-868-4444.)

ANAÏS NIN: ONE OF HER LIVES
For those who have seen Philip Kaufman's entertaining 1990 screen adaptation of "Henry & June," Anaïs Nin's memoir of her relationship with the novelist Henry Miller and his Brooklyn-born wife, June, in Depression-era Paris, this show is not only redundant but absurd. Structurally, the play resembles Kaufman's film: Anaïs wants to escape her boring bourgeois life, so she becomes involved with Miller (David Bishins) and his crafty wife (Alysia Reiner). The play's writer and director, Wendy Beckett, indirectly stresses Nin's most annoying characteristics: her monstrous self-absorption, her self-consciously "poetic" writing, and her dilettantism. As the title character, Angela Christian does the best she can with the part, but she is ill-served by a director whose fantasy about Nin (the poet as free spirit) can't disguise the fame-hungry shrew she really was. (Beckett, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. Through Aug. 26.)

BRUTALITY OF FACT
Stephanie Yankwitt directs a revival of Keith Reddin's black comedy about the decline of a troubled family, featuring Joy Franz. (Urban Stages, 259 W. 30th St. 212-868-4444.)

CREATION: A CLOWN SHOW
Lucas Caleb Rooney has a face like Fred Flintstone's, but with a big red nose. In his one-man show, he displays not only a gift for rubbery physical mimicry—watch him become a brood hen hatching chicks, or Captain Ahab chasing Moby-Dick—but also the pure joy of a kid in a sandbox making a very messy mud pie. In the show (directed by Orlando Pabotoy and aided by two deadpan musicians), Rooney is called upon by a disembodied voice reading from Genesis to become the Biblical God of creation: to find a way to separate darkness from light, to create land, sea, and Heaven. He does this with whatever props are at hand—including a water bottle, potting soil, and raw eggs—and a wonderful conviction that his messy mud pie is, in fact, our Heaven and earth. Rooney works hard to convince us that he's a simpleton, but his creations are genuinely funny and surprising. (Theatre Five, 311 W. 43rd St. 212-868-4444.)

THE DEATH IN THE JUNIPER GROVE
Three former classmates return to the site of a friend's death, in this drama written and directed by Le Wilhelm. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

THE DISPUTE
Pierre Marivaux's 1744 comedy about four nubile foundlings enjoys a deliciously barbed revival under the director Jean Randich, in this National Asian American Theatre Company production. A powerful prince and his paramour decide to settle a question that's plagued humanity ever since the gates of Eden slammed shut: namely, which gender bears responsibility for the decay of love's purity. Two male orphans (Alexis Camins and Lanny Joon) and two females (Jennifer Chang and Olivia Oguma)—each raised in isolation—are suddenly let loose in a kind of Skinnerian behavioral lab. They meet and succumb to puppy love, inconstancy, and jealousy, their every move observed by their keepers. The four young actors have a bouncy comic innocence, and Randich's practiced hand guides their syncopated movements. (Abingdon, 312 W. 36th St. 212-868-4444. Through Aug. 26.)

EVENSONG
Mary Gage based her play on interviews with octogenarians living in Michigan. Lewis Magruder directs. (TBG Arts Center, 312 W. 36th St. 212-352-3101. Through Aug. 27.)

HENRIK IBSEN + JON FOSSE: NORWAY MEETS NEW YORK
Oslo Elsewhere presents English translations of "Rosmersholm," by Ibsen, and "Deathvariations," by Fosse. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

INDIAN BLOOD
A. R. Gurney's semi-autobiographical drama, presented by Primary Stages, takes place in wintry nineteen-forties Buffalo, where Gurney's teen-age alter ego, Eddie (Charles Socarides), is caught doodling a dirty picture in Latin class and blames his bad behavior on a trace of Native American ancestry. Without pressing any thematic buttons too hard, Gurney creates out of this incident a warm reminiscence that is equal parts affectionate and subversive. In an explicit homage to Thornton Wilder's "Our Town," the set is bare-bones—it calls to mind a disintegrating old photograph—but the space left by the lack of furniture is more than compensated for by the funny and nuanced characters in Eddie's Wasp family. (59E59, at 59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200.)

KIKI & HERB: ALIVE ON BROADWAY
As Kiki, the ancient lounge singer with a potty mouth and a rather philosophical view of the world, Justin Bond gives this show everything he's got, which is a great deal. By turns solipsistic and spot on as a social reporter, Bond's Kiki sings—in an ear-ringing growl—tunes that emphasize what she means to say, especially when she's in her cups. Backed on the piano and in life by the sweet-faced, even-tempered Herb (the adorable Kenny Mellman), Kiki covers a lot of ground in this show, including President Bush, homosexual rights, and Jesus and the manger. Still, Bond and Mellman, who wrote and directed the production, could have benefitted from a little outside direction, if only to cut certain of the script's redundancies. Mostly, though, we're happy to spend time with this odd couple, who would hurt themselves with booze and delusions before they'd hurt a fly. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.)

MARCO MILLIONS (BASED ON LIES)
Tom Ridgely directs this drama adapted from Eugene O'Neill's play about the travels of Marco Polo. (Lion, 410 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200. Through Aug. 26.)

MARTIN SHORT: FAME BECOMES ME
The comedian and "Saturday Night Live" alum stars in a mock-autobiographical musical, with original songs by Marc Shaiman and Scott Wittman (who also directs). The book is by Short and Daniel Goldfarb, with additional material from Alan Zweibel. (Bernard B. Jacobs, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

FILIP PAGOWSKI

MR. DOOLEY'S AMERICA
The Irish Repertory Theatre presents this comedy based on the turn-of-the-century newspaper columnist Finley Peter Dunne, who wrote social and political commentary in the guise of a fictitious Irish pub owner. Written by Philip Dunne and Martin Blaine. (132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737.)

MOTHER COURAGE AND HER CHILDREN
Meryl Streep and Kevin Kline star in Bertolt Brecht's tale about a matriarch who loses several children to an ongoing war. This season's final Shakespeare in the Park production features a new translation by Tony Kushner, with original songs by Jeanine Tesori. Directed by George C. Wolfe. (Delacorte Theatre, Central Park near W. 81st St. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 212-539-8750.)

NEW YORK INTERNATIONAL FRINGE FESTIVAL
The tenth annual celebration of downtown theatre includes more than two hundred shows at twenty-one venues. Highlights include the Rude Mechanicals' political drama "I Coulda Been a Kennedy," Brian Parks's black comedy "Americana Absurdum," and the self-explanatory "Band Geeks: A Halftime Musical." (212-279-4488. For complete schedule, visit www.fringenyc.org. Through Aug. 27.)

OUT OF TOWN

BERKSHIRE THEATRE FESTIVAL
Wendy Wasserstein's Pulitzer Prize-winning play, "The Heidi Chronicles," continues its run. At the intimate Unicorn Theatre, "The Pilgrim Papers" closes Aug. 26. (Stockbridge, Mass. For more information, visit www.berkshiretheatre.org. 413-298-5576.)

HUDSON VALLEY SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL
Terrence O'Brien directs "A Midsummer Night's Dream," and Gia Forakis directs "The Rivals." (Garrison, N.Y. For more information, visit www.hvshakespeare.org. 845-265-9575.)

WILLIAMSTOWN THEATRE FESTIVAL
At the Main Stage, Rick Elice and Roger Rees's "Double Double" runs through Aug. 27. (Williamstown, Mass. 413-597-3400.)

Also Playing

AVENUE Q: Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THE COLOR PURPLE:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 212-239-6200. **THE DROWSY CHAPERONE:** Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 212-307-4100. **HAIRSPRAY:** Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 212-307-4100. **THE HISTORY BOYS:** Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **JACQUES BREL IS ALIVE AND WELL AND LIVING IN PARIS:** Zipper, 336 W. 37th St. 212-239-6200. **JERSEY BOYS:** August Wilson, 245 W. 52nd St. 212-239-6200. **THE LIEUTENANT OF INISHMORE:** Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THE LION KING:** Minskoff, 220 W. 45th St. 212-307-4747. **MONTY PYTHON'S SPAMALOT:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **NO CHILD . . . :** Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-239-6200. **PIG FARM:** Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300. **SWEENEY TODD:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200. **[TITLE OF SHOW]:** Vineyard, 108 E. 15th St. 212-279-4200. **THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE:** Circle in the Square, 50th St. between Broadway and Eighth Ave. 212-239-6200. **THE WEDDING SINGER:** Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

BARBÈS
376 9th St., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-965-9177)—Aug. 26: Rob Curto, a New York-based virtuoso of the accordion, the organ, and the piano, leads the band **Forro for All**, which plays the backcountry dance music of northwestern Brazil—think samba meets zydeco, with a twist of merengue. Aug. 29: The violinist **Jenny Scheinman** returns to her Tuesday-night residency. Later on Aug. 29: The local Balkan brass band **Slavic Soul Party** takes up its customary weekly spot.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—Aug. 24-27: **Rancid**, the first name in punk revivalism, came slam-dancing out of Berkeley in the early nineties. With a sound that's somewhere between the Clash and the Specials, they've endured for some fifteen years. Now members of the Old Guard, they still kick up a ska-punk maelstrom worthy of their younger days.

BEACON THEATRE
Broadway at 74th St. (212-307-7171)—Aug. 23: Stars of the comedy, rock, and literary worlds join forces for the **"Revenge of the Book Eaters"** tour, part of an effort to promote children's literacy. The six-city road show gets under way with appearances by the television comedian Jon Stewart; the musicians Sufjan Stevens, David Byrne, and John Roderick; and the writers Dave Eggers and Sarah Vowell. This performance benefits 826NYC, a Brooklyn-based nonprofit writing center for kids. (The tour's title comes from a story written at the center by a ten-year-old named Rafaello Adler-Abramo.) John Hodgman, the author of the faux almanac "The Areas of My Expertise," hosts. (For more information, visit www.bookeaters.org.)

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—Aug. 23: The questing British experimentalist **Herbert**, who also goes by Radioboy, Wishmountain, Doctor Rockit, and other aliases, is a classically trained pianist, but he's built his reputation on crafting electronic dance music through unconventional methods. (His first live performance featured a sampler and a bag of potato chips.) His latest album, "Scales," includes the sounds made by gas pumps, fighter aircraft, and other unexpected sources. Opening for him is **Skye**, the former front woman for the trip-hop sensation Morcheeba. Her solo début, "Mind How You Go," finds her silky voice in fine shape.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Aug. 24: If you've listened to the radio more than a handful of times in the past half century, you've heard the work of **PF Sloan**, even if you don't know his name. He wrote many hits, including "Secret Agent Man" and "Eve of Destruction," which Barry McGuire took to the top of the charts in 1965. Sloan dropped out of the music business some thirty years ago, but he recently released a new solo album, "Sailover," and he's on his first U.S. tour ever.

LIVING ROOM
154 Ludlow St. (212-533-7235)—Aug. 29: **Jesus H. Christ and the Four Hornsmen of the Apocalypse.** This lovable local band transcends the novelty of its name with wry, thundering power-pop songs about such previously underexplored subjects as the boredom of living in the Constitution State ("Connecticut Is for Fucking"), the appeal of the recently widowed ("Do Me"), and how pharmaceuticals can help love ("Happy Me"). Also that night, the singer-songwriter **Alice Texas** (a New Yorker born Alice Schneider) rides through the oppressive small towns and dry prairies of her imagination, searching for love and redemption.

MERCURY LOUNGE
217 E. Houston St. (212-260-4700)—Aug. 23: The **Mobius Band** delivers an urbane synthesis of solid-state effects and straight-ahead power pop. With **Alice Smith**, a singer with a four-octave range who leans toward ambitious and thoughtful R. & B.

RIVER TO RIVER FESTIVAL
Aug. 25: **Ted Leo**, a true hero of the underground, writes songs packed with insightful lyrics, which he leavens with aggressive guitar work and poi-

PRADA
Tel. +1 888 977 1900

gnant vocalizing. (Pier 17, South Street Seaport. For more information, visit www.rivertorivernyc.com.)

S.O.B.'S
204 Varick St., at W. Houston St. (212-243-4940)—Aug. 29: The Venezuelan electro-pop band **Todosantos** skips around the post-punk map with abandon, mixing Mancunian influences (one of their songs takes its name from Ian Curtis, the late lead singer of the band Joy Division) with dark droning guitars and skittish transistor-generated touches.

WEBSTER HALL
125 E. 11th St. (212-353-1600)—Aug. 23: The up-and-coming British chanteuse **Corinne Bailey Rae.**

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—Aug. 22-27: **Oscar Peterson.** Advanced age and illness (he had a stroke in 1993) have yet to tarnish any of the lustre that the pianist has accumulated in a career that stretches back to the late forties. More than ever, he personifies what his biographer, Gene Lees, subtitled his study of Peterson, "the will to swing."

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—Aug. 22-27: The Brazilian vocalist **Tania Maria.**

"CHARLIE PARKER JAZZ FESTIVAL"
This two-day gathering salutes the bebop avatar, with performances by **David Sanchez, Sonny Fortune, Ray Mantilla, George Coleman, Greg Osby, Joanne Brackeen,** and **Chico Hamilton,** whose eighty-fifth birthday will merit its own in-festival celebration. (Marcus Garvey Park, Fifth Ave. at 120th St. Aug. 26. Tompkins Square Park, St. Marks Pl. at Avenue A. Aug. 27. For more information, visit www.cityparksfoundation.org.)

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—Aug. 22-27: The octogenarian drummer **Roy Haynes** plays with the vigor and the inventiveness of musicians born decades after his own work with Young, Parker, Coltrane, Corea, and others. He's fronting his band Fountain of Youth, which features **Jaleel Shaw** on saxophone, **Martin Bejerano** on piano, and **David Wong** on bass.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Aug. 24-27: The bassist **Eddie Gomez** and the pianist **Mark Kramer** are joined by the drummer **Gene Jackson.** Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.** The **Mingus Big Band** takes over on Tuesdays.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—Aug. 23-27: The pianist **Mulgrew Miller,** one of the most in-demand sidemen of his generation, stops by with his ensemble Wingspan, which features the vibraphonist **Steve Nelson** and the saxophonist **Steve Wilson.**

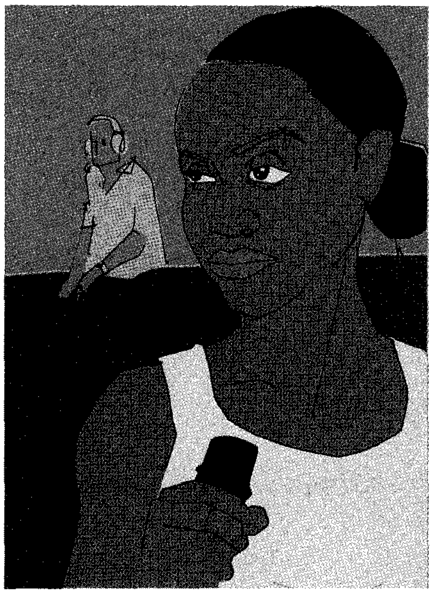
VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Aug. 22-27: With the help of the bassist **Darryl Hall** and the drummer **Jimmy Cobb,** the pianist **Gerri Allen** spotlights her new album, "Timeless Portraits and Dreams." The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-535-7710)—**"Raphael at the Metropolitan: The Colonna Altarpiece."** Through Sept. 4. ♦ **"Girodet: Romantic Rebel."** Through Aug. 27. ♦ **"On Photography: A Tribute to Susan Sontag."** Through Sept. 4. ♦ **"Treasures of Sacred Maya Kings."** Through Sept. 10. ♦ **"Cai Guo-Qiang on the Roof: Transparent Monument."** This summer, the roof garden is home to four sculptural works by the Chinese-born artist. Among them is "Clear Sky Black Cloud," a timed gunpowder explosion that produces a small cloud of smoke over Central Park each day at noon. Through Oct. 29. ♦ **"Rembrandt and His Circle: Drawings and Prints."** Through Oct. 15. ♦ **"AngloMania: Tradition and Transgression in British Fashion."** Through Sept. 4. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART
11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—**"Dada,"** a large and illuminating survey of the anti-art movement that countered despair with absurdity. Through Sept. 11. ♦ **"Douglas Gordon: Timeline"** includes the artist's most famous work, the glacially paced reëngineered film "24 Hour *Psycho*." Through Sept. 4. ♦ **"Artist's Choice: Herzog & de Meuron, Perception Restrained."** Culling objects from the permanent collection, the Swiss architects Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron have built what they call a "perception machine." A darkened room is lined with wooden benches, on which are placed hand mirrors that can be used to view movie clips—"Bonnie and Clyde," "Dead Ringers"—playing on flat-screen monitors on the ceiling. Pointy naked breasts and anguished male faces predominate, punctuated by explosions. Visitors can also peer through horizontal slits in black-painted walls. One diorama-like bay holds items from the design department: chairs, flatware, a red plastic Valentine manual typewriter. In another are photographs—by Sherman, Arbus, et al.—while a third contains a selection of paintings and sculptures by artists ranging from Barnett Newman to Matthew Barney. The choice of works adds a menacing edge to the peepshow vibe. Through Sept. 25. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)



The vocalist Skye, at Irving Plaza.

JEROEN KOOLHAAS

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"No Limits, Just Edges: Jackson Pollock Paintings on Paper."** Through Sept. 29. ♦ **"Zaha Hadid."** Through Oct. 25. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART
Madison Ave. at 75th St. (800-944-8639)—**"Full House,"** the Whitney's seventy-fifth-anniversary extravaganza, includes a floor devoted entirely to the works of Edward Hopper. Through Sept. 3. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM AT ALTRIA
120 Park Ave., at 42nd St. (917-663-2453)—"A course or path that one follows," "a mark or line left by something that has passed," "a sign of some past thing," and "something traced or drawn" are a few of the Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary definitions provided, in wall-text form, as touchstones for this show, called **"Trace."** These guidelines become a foggy filter through which to read works that could just as easily have been united under other words and concepts. Karyn Olivier's oversized poplar "Junglegym" serves as a vestige of childhood memory; Karlis Rekevics's plaster casts of highway structures offer found-object imprints; Jedediah Caesar's plaster-and-resin disks preserve debris from his studio. Most of the work here is big and ambitious, but collectively it's underwhelming. Through Nov. 12. (Open Mondays through Fridays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 7:30.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART
200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"Graffiti,"** a survey of the urban art form. Through Sept. 3. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and weekends, 11 to 6.)

ASIA SOCIETY
Park Ave. at 70th St. (212-288-6400)—This year marks the fiftieth anniversary of the founding of the Asia Society, which celebrates the occasion with **"A Passion for Asia: The Rockefeller Family Collects,"** a show honoring its patrons. Through Sept. 3. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Friday evenings until 9.)

CHELSEA ART MUSEUM
556 W. 22nd St. (212-255-0719)—**"It's Not a Photo. . . ."** This sketchy survey of contemporary photographic abstraction brings together eight artists, including three key players in the field, but fails to make much of a point or an impact. James Welling starts things off with a group of big, luminous, subtly graded color images made by exposing sheets of photographic paper to the light of an enlarger. Wolfgang Tillmans and Marco Breuer also employ cameraless techniques to equally gorgeous (if, in Breuer's case, considerably more labor-intensive) ends. Jeremy Blake's digitally generated videos are far more engaging than his panoramic still images, which end up looking slick. As with some of the other work in the show, the immediate rush of pleasure quickly dissipates and turns cloying. Through Aug. 26. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, noon to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

COOPER-HEWITT NATIONAL DESIGN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 91st St. (212-849-8300)—J. Alfred Prufrock measured out his life in coffee spoons. Others may have used muddlers, ladles, scoops, skimmers, oyster forks, sugar tongs, grape scissors, corn-kernel rakes, or silver ice-cream hatchets—all of which are displayed in **"Feeding Desire: Design and the Tools of the Table, 1500-2005."** Seventeenth-century knife-and-fork sets in personal carrying cases of tooled leather; airline flatware with mod, rounded corners; and a plastic "spoon-o-brush" that can be used for both eating and teeth-cleaning are also on hand. Materials range from sharkskin to Bakelite, and there's a video of silverware being cast in a delicate forge. Through Oct. 29. ♦ **"Frederic Church, Winslow Homer, and Thomas Moran: Tourism and the American Landscape."** Through Oct. 22. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, 10 to 5, Fridays, 10 to 9, Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, noon to 6.)

DAHESH MUSEUM OF ART
580 Madison Ave., at 57th St. (212-759-0606)—**"Napoleon on the Nile: Soldiers, Artists, and the Rediscovery of Egypt."** Through Sept. 3. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6.)

FRICK COLLECTION
1 E. 70th St. (212-288-0700)—**"Jean-Étienne Liotard (1702-89): Swiss Master."** Pastels don't get much respect, but Liotard argues for a closer look at the medium. A peripatetic Swiss, he took his box of chalks with him to Geneva, Paris, Sicily, Constantinople, and Vienna, drawing the local nobility as he went. His most important patron was the Empress Maria Theresa, the only female ruler in the Hapsburg dynasty. A miniature of the Empress in Turkish costume serves as an early indicator of the Orientalism that would become a nineteenth-century craze. More fascinating, and poignant, are the childhood portraits of the Empress's brood of sixteen, including ten daughters

with the first name Maria (among them Maria Antonia, a.k.a. Marie Antoinette). Wall text accompanying the portraits describes their noble marriages, battles with smallpox, and status as Beethoven's benefactors. Through Sept. 17. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6, and Sundays, 11 to 5.)

INTERNATIONAL CENTER OF PHOTOGRAPHY
1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. (212-857-0000)—**"Atta Kim: On-Air."** Kim, the South Korean photographer whose complementary show at the Milo gallery, in Chelsea, also closes this week, is an ambitious, versatile artist who tends to work in an imposingly grand scale and with big themes, including the transient nature of all life. Many of the pictures here were made as unusually long exposures, so that each image captures stationary objects and ephemeral movement. Times Square and Grand Central Terminal, both recorded over a period of eight hours, appear at once eerily depopulated and full of ghosts. In another series, up to a hundred identically posed men and women are superimposed one upon the other until their identities merge. But is the result a universal ideal or an empty cipher? Through Aug. 27. ♦ **"Unknown Weegee."** Through Aug. 27. ♦ **"Tempo, Tempo! The Bauhaus Photomontages of Marianne Brandt."** Through Aug. 27. (Open Tuesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 10 to 6, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

JEWISH MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 92nd St. (212-423-3200)—**"Eva Hesse: Sculpture."** Through Sept. 17. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 11 to 5:45, Thursdays, 11 to 9, and Fridays, 11 to 3. For the duration of the Hesse show, the museum will also be open on Saturdays, from 11 to 5:45, with no charge for admission.)

MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK
Fifth Ave. at 103rd St. (212-534-1672)—**"The High Style of Dorothy Draper."** Through Oct. 9. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

NEUE GALERIE
1048 Fifth Ave., at 86th St. (212-628-6200)—**"Gustav Klimt: Five Paintings from the Collection of Ferdinand and Adele Bloch-Bauer"** includes the 1907 gold-and-silver-laced portrait of Adele, which will be joining the Neue Galerie's permanent collection. Through Sept. 18. (Open Thursdays and Saturdays through Mondays, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 11 to 9.)

NEW YORK CITY FIRE MUSEUM
278 Spring St. (212-691-1303)—This small museum accomplishes the trick of presenting a broad history of New York through a narrow, specialized lens. Items range in date from 1800, when city water mains were made of massive logs hollowed out with a hot poker, to 1875, when blue-and-gold hose reels with decorative plumes were hauled through the streets by hand, to March 26, 1911, the day after the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire, when the front page of the New York *Evening Journal* displayed a dangling noose and the proclamation "This Fits Somebody: Who Is He?," to our city's most immediate tragedy, on September 11, 2001. Special exhibits focus on these major events, while the permanent collection presents assorted memorabilia like axes, hoses, engines, badges, shields, uniforms, toys, posters, and the taxidermied remains of a firehouse dog who could climb the pole. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 5, and Sundays, 10 to 4.)

NEW-YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY
170 Central Park W., at 77th St. (212-873-3400)—**"Legacies: Contemporary Artists Reflect on Slavery."** The museum's first foray into contemporary art explores an ignoble history. The artists represented include Betye Saar, Carrie Mae Weems, Glenn Ligon, Kara Walker, and Fred Wilson. Through Jan. 7. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6, and Friday evenings until 8.)

NOGUCHI MUSEUM
9-01 33rd Rd., at Vernon Blvd., Long Island City (718-204-7088)—**"Best of Friends: R. Buckminster Fuller and Isamu Noguchi."** Through Oct. 15. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and weekends, 11 to 6.)

P.S. 1 CONTEMPORARY ART CENTER
22-25 Jackson Ave., at 46th Ave., Long Island City (718-784-2084)—**"Time Frame."** Time wasn't much of an issue for visual artists until film, video, and performance came along. Andy Warhol's "Sleep" (1963), a three-hundred-and-twenty-one-minute film of the poet John Giorno snoring away (whittled down here to a snappy forty-two minutes), serves as a touchstone. John Pilson's twenty-four-minute "Dark Empire" pays homage to another Warhol film, the eight-hour-plus "Empire," while Cory Arcangel pushes the genre farther with a thirty-three-day-long version of Dennis Hopper's 1988 film, "Colors." Hiroshi Sugimoto's photographs of theatre screens, exposed for the duration of a film, are characteristically controlled and elegant. Paul Pfeiffer's camera-tipsy sunset offers a surprisingly new way to view an exhausted subject. Roni Horn's minimalist glass blocks aren't really apropos, but so much of her work is about time that she seems to have earned a bye. Through Sept. 18. ♦ **"John Lurie: Works on Paper."** Through Sept. 4. ♦ **"Into Me/Out of Me."** A hundred and thirty artists—including Kiki Smith, Ugo Rondinone, Pipilotti Rist, and Robert Gober—ponder the boundaries of bodies. Through Sept. 25. ♦ **"Ron Gorchov: Double Trouble."** Through Sept. 18. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, noon to 6.)

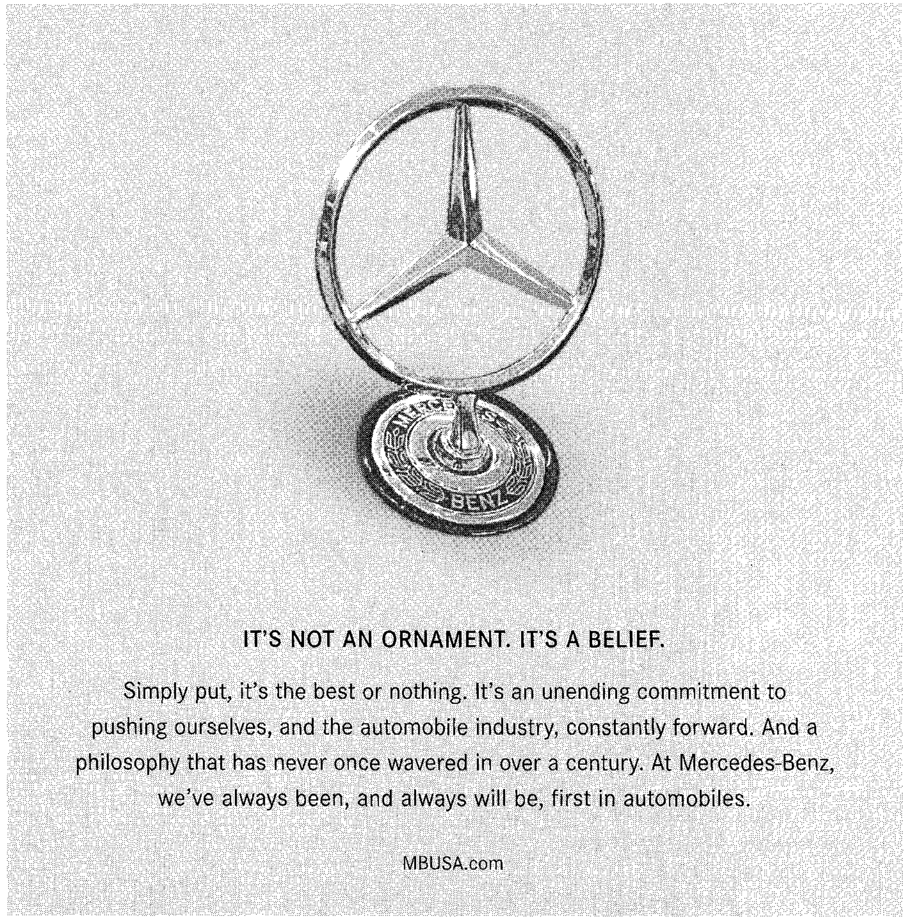
QUEEN SOFÍA SPANISH INSTITUTE
684 Park Ave., at 68th St. (212-628-0420)—**"Ràfols-Casamada, Paintings 1950-2005."** Albert Ràfols-Casamada, born in Barcelona in 1923, is, like Antoni Tàpies, an internationally known abstract painter who is also a cultural hero in his native Catalonia. A survey of Ràfols-Casamada's large acrylic canvases from the fifties through last year reveals a spare and brooding sense of composition, with expanses of pure color occasionally marked with quasi-figurative or symbolic circles, triangles, and lines. The palette favors muted rusts, umbers, and midnight blues, slashed with bright red or yellow ochre. One thinks of Rothko as digested by Diebenkorn, or a New York School sensibility transferred to a dry mountain plateau. Through Sept. 29. (Open Mondays through Fridays, 10 to 6, and Saturdays, 10 to 5.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Summer-hours warning: Many galleries are open Mondays through Fridays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6. Others follow the normal Tuesday-to-Saturday schedule. It's best to call ahead.

"CLASSIC BEAUTY"
Happily, "classic" applies to only a few of the more than thirty vintage and modern photographs of the female nude assembled here. Alongside work in this refined, restrained, and somewhat mannered style by Weston, Mapplethorpe, Drtikol, and others are a number of much earthier images, most of them by the Latin-American artists who are the gallery's prime focus. The pear-shaped bodies of the women photographed by Manuel Alvarez Bravo, Valdir Cruz, Antonio Reynoso, and Fritz Henle help replace the notion of classic beauty with a far more generous and erotic reality. Through Sept. 2. (Throckmorton, 145 E. 57th St. 212-223-1059.)

"LANDSCAPE IN YOUR MIND"
A sampling of contemporary works ranging from the poetic to the bodily to the cerebral. Inés Lombardi's video and photographs taken during a freighter voyage between Rotterdam and the Black Sea assume the poetic tack, depicting both misty beauty and industrial wreckage while ruminating on the fate of maritime Europe. The bodily is made explicit, formally and otherwise, in Otto Muehl's canvas of a heavily impastoed woman relieving herself in a neon-bright landscape. Heinz Greissing's perceptually challenging paintings take the cerebral approach, alternating stripes of competing landscapes in a Venetian-blind pattern.



©2006 Mercedes-Benz USA, LLC

Simply put, it's the best or nothing. It's an unending commitment to pushing ourselves, and the automobile industry, constantly forward. And a philosophy that has never once wavered in over a century. At Mercedes-Benz, we've always been, and always will be, first in automobiles.

MBUSA.com

Please always wear your seat belt.

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
THE DADA LENS

Some of the best photographs in town right now, and certainly the most enduringly avant-garde, are scattered throughout MOMA's exhilarating "Dada" show.

They may not have the impact of Duchamp's audacious readymades, but their effect is no less destabilizing, insidious, or thrilling. Duchamp is the subject of two of the show's most famous photographs, both made in collaboration with Man Ray and featuring Dada's slyest provocateur in drag as the dour Belle Haleine and the seductive Rrose Sélavy. Man Ray, who abstracted objects and figures in his dreamy later Rayographs, had his own witty way with objects—witness "Man," the 1918 photograph of a dangling eggbeater and its shadow. Bits of photographs crop up in collages by Hannah Höch, Raoul Hausmann, and Johannes Baargeld; Christian Schad reduced the image to its most viral form in a series of mysterious little "Schadographs," jaggedly cut photograms of random detritus that anticipate the raw energy of punk graphics. Schad recalled that he was seeking "lawless simplicity," and these works capture it brilliantly.

—*Vince Aletti*

Herbert Brandl's verdant abstractions, Otto Zitko's swirling red-and-black wall mural, and Eva Schlegel's sharp-horizoned seascapes round out this show, which is much richer than its daft title suggests. Through Oct. 28. (Austrian Cultural Forum, 11 E. 52nd St. 212-319-5300.)

Short List

NANCY RUBINS: Lincoln Center, Broadway at 64th St. 212-980-4575. Through Sept. 4. **DORIS ULMANN:** De Lellis, 47 E. 68th St. 212-327-1482. Through Sept. 23. **"FREEING THE LINE":** Marian Goodman, 24 W. 57th St. 212-977-7160. Through Aug. 26. **"ON THE ROCKS AND OVER THE EDGE":** Greenberg, 41 E. 57th St. 212-334-0010. Through Aug. 25. **"YES BRUCE NAUMAN":** Zwirner & Wirth, 32 E. 69th St. 212-517-8677. Through Sept. 9.

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

STUART HAWKINS

Hawkins made her series of partially staged photographs—collectively titled "Customs"—in the past two years in Nepal, where she lives part time. They're accompanied by a video work, "Souvenir," in which she searches for a native who has never had an encounter with the Western world. Through Sept. 23. (Feuer, 530 W. 24th St. 212-989-7700.)

"PARTIAL RECALL"

This group show's ostensible subject, memory and its vicissitudes, is very broad, and perhaps that is why it seems so unfocussed: the tawdry reliquaries of Mike Kelley and Jeffrey Vallance compete with Christian Curiel's and Michael Vasquez's moody-childhood paintings, which in turn bump up against the moody-adulthood photographs of Juergen Teller and Dash Snow. Odd folks out are Kutlug Ataman and Emma Kay. Ataman's bleak video diptych, featuring interviews with an impoverished woman and girl in Istanbul, belongs in another exhibition altogether. Kay's text-drawings of Shakespeare from memory feel equally out of place—though the stage direction from "A Winter's Tale" (sic) is, perhaps, adaptable: "Exit, pursued by a bear." Through Aug. 25. (Lehmann Maupin, 540 W. 26th St. 212-255-2923.)

Short List

TARA DONOVAN: PaceWildenstein, 534 W. 25th St. 212-929-7000. Through Aug. 25. **MICHAEL HEIZER:** PaceWildenstein, 545 W. 22nd St. 212-989-4258. Through Sept. 23. **ATTA KIM:** Milo, 525 W. 25th St. 212-414-0370. Through Aug. 25. **HOWARDENA PINDELL:** N'Namdi, 526 W. 26th St. 212-929-6645. Through Aug. 31. **HANS RICHTER:** Stendhal, 545 W. 20th St. 212-366-1549. Through Sept. 16. **MARTIN SCHOELLER:** Hasted Hunt, 529 W. 20th St. 212-627-0006. Through Sept. 1. **RICHARD SERRA:** Gagosian, 555 W. 24th St. 212-741-1111. Through Sept. 23. **"ARCADIA":** Richardson, 535 W. 22nd St. 646-230-9610. Through Aug. 25. **"SMALL WONDERS":** Mann, 210 Eleventh Ave. 212-989-7600. Through Aug. 25. **"SOUTINE AND MODERN ART":** Cheim & Read, 547 W. 25th St. 212-242-7727. Through Sept. 8.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

JOSEF FELIX MÜLLER

Müller's supersized (most are a little over nine feet by fifteen feet) expressionistic woodcuts from 1986, with their gaping human figures drawn in nervous, jiggling outline, possess a sort of anachronistic, poetic interest of their own, but it's difficult to keep from thinking about how they were created. The catalogue states that "the chainsaw is [Müller's] most important instrument," and a video shows assistants shuffling, sock-footed, around a huge sheet of paper pressed against a huge block of wood covered with ink. In this case, the behind-the-scenes aspect threatens to take precedence over the objects themselves. Through Aug. 26. (Peter Blum, 99 Wooster St. 212-343-0441.)

"MEGAZINES"

The gallery has been set up like a very chic, high-concept library reading room, with racks full of influential and avant-garde publications ranging from the nineteen-teens French fashion magazine *Gazette du Bon Ton* to the latest issue of *Fanzine 137*. Copies of *Flair*, *Asian Punk Boy*, *Minotaure*, *Eros*, and dozens of other periodicals can be lifted from their shelves (with the provided cotton gloves) and studied at tidy white carrels in the pristine white cube. Through Nov. 3. (Visionaire, 11 Mercer St. 212-274-8959.)

Short List

ALEXANDER CALDER: City Hall Park. For further information, see www.publicartfund.org. Through March 18, 2007. **"MARILYN":** Staley-Wise, 560 Broadway. 212-966-6223. Through Sept. 1.

DANCE

DOWNTOWN DANCE FESTIVAL

Battery Dance Company's annual festival of free outdoor performances turns twenty-five this year, and the emphasis is still on diversity. The sixteen companies on offer, both established and fledgling, encompass tap, tango, modern, kathak, Afro-Cuban, Japanese, Chinese, and Filipino dance, in a variety of combinations. The commissioned production "Ocean of Light" brings dancers from New Orleans together with dancers from South Asia to honor the victims of Hurricane Katrina and the 2004 tsunami. (Aug. 21-27. For complete schedule, visit www.batterydanceco.com.)

ELLIS WOOD DANCE

As part of the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council's free "Sitelines" series, the twenty women in Wood's ensemble perform "Fire on Wall Street," one of the choreographer's four-elements displays of feminine power, amid the concrete and glass of the financial district. Barely clothed in webs of red mesh, the dancers writhe like maenads on the balconies of Cipriani, a conflagration of tulle in the land of ticker tape. (55 Wall St. 212-219-9401. Aug. 23 and Aug. 28-30 at noon and 12:30.)

"LACUNA"

Tom Pearson creates urban rituals that draw on his Native American heritage. Like "Reel," the dance he presented last year at the National Museum of the American Indian, "Lacuna" is a site-specific work created in collaboration with the composer Louis Mofsie and impelled by the drums of the Heyna Second Sons. This time around, the stomping ground is outdoors—the Lincoln Center reflecting pool, drained of water—and Rob Mastrianni brings his electric guitar. Pearson and his dancers pivot at the pelvis like oil-pump jacks, pantomime riding the subway, and inflect their motions with absent-minded, everyday gestures. (North Plaza, Lincoln Center. 212-546-2656. Aug. 23 at 6 and 6:45.)

MISNOMER DANCE THEATRE

Chris Elam's "Throw People" gets an extended run at the Brooklyn Lyceum Theatre. People are thrown and twisted into human origami and tied into three-person pretzels with only two feet on the ground. Elam's wonderfully strange and unpredictable choreography makes his dancers seem less like people than like anthropomorphized beasts. (227 Fourth Ave., Brooklyn. 718-857-4816. Aug. 24-25 and Aug. 27 at 7 and Aug. 26 at 5 and 7.)

GARTH FAGAN DANCE

Fagan's spirited, crackerjack dancers reprise six of his early and recent works in a thirty-fifth-anniversary program at Lincoln Center Out of Doors. The Rochester-based troupe performs a progression of works set to jazz and classical scores, from "Prelude: Discipline Is Freedom" (1983) to "Translation Tran-

EL LISSITZKY/ARS, NY/VG BILD-KUNST, BONN

sition" (2002). The retrospective-in-miniature shows Fagan's enduring taste for long balances, propulsive movement, and the unexpected juxtapositions he draws from a sweeping dance vocabulary. (Damrosch Park Band Shell, Lincoln Center. 212-546-2656. Aug. 25-26 at 8.)

OUT OF TOWN

JACOB'S PILLOW
The Mark Morris Dance Group's twenty-fifth-anniversary party bus stops at the Ted Shawn Theatre this week, where Morris will mark his fiftieth birthday by performing in the festive, witty trio "From Old Seville" (on Saturday night only). Three rotating programs—each anchored by the 1981 classic "Gloria"—highlight Morris's less often performed chamber pieces, from the early "Dad's Charts" and "Songs That Tell a Story," to nineties gems like "Pas de Poisson" and "Three Preludes," to "Peccadillos" (2000). A free screening on Saturday afternoon unearths Morris video clips from the Pillow's archives. Meanwhile, at the Doris Duke Studio Theatre, the red-hot Rubberbandance Group, from Montreal, makes its Pillow début. The company's artistic director, Victor Quijada (a former B-boy), dresses his dancers in jeans and sneakers but sets his fluid, high-octane break dancing to Prokofiev and Vivaldi, among others, blending flash-quick popping with a concert-dance theatricality that recalls Quijada's years with Twyla Tharp Dance and Les Grands Ballets Canadiens de Montréal. (Becket, Mass. 413-243-0745. Aug. 22-27. For complete schedule, visit www.jacobspillow.org.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC CONCERTS IN TOWN

MOSTLY MOZART FESTIVAL
Aug. 23 and Aug. 25 at 7:30: The festival's final week begins auspiciously, with William Christie bringing his ultra-disciplined singers and players of Les Arts Florissants over from France to perform the first of Mozart's great operas, **"Idomeneo"**; the semi-staged production features Paul Agnew, Tuva Semmingsen, Claire Debono, and Violet Noorduyn in the leading roles. (Rose Theatre, Broadway at 60th St.) ♦ Aug. 23 at 10:30: The festival's series of "Little Night Music" concerts—one-hour programs in a relaxed cabaret setting—continues with two persuasive young artists, the violinist Lisa Batiashvili and the pianist Lars Vogt, offering a pair of Mozart sonatas. (Kaplan Penthouse.) ♦ Aug. 24 at 8: With the Emerson String Quartet's violist, Lawrence Dutton, out for shoulder surgery, the remaining players get some help from their friends, including the pianist Leon Fleisher, the violist Jaime Laredo, and the cellist Sharon Robinson, who join them in works by Mozart (the chamber version of the Piano Concerto No. 12 in A Major), Beethoven, and Brahms (the String Sextet No. 2). (Avery Fisher Hall.) ♦ Aug. 24 at 10:30: The young Daedalus String Quartet, winners of the 2001 Banff Competition, fills in for the Emersons at the Kaplan Penthouse, offering Mozart's Quartet in G Major, K. 387, and Ravel's Quartet in F Major. ♦ Aug. 25-26 at 8: In the grand finale, Louis Langrée, the festival's vigorous music director, leads the Mostly Mozart Festival Orchestra in the composer's last three symphonies (Nos. 39-41), the crowning achievements of the Classical style. (Avery Fisher Hall.) (212-721-6500.)

"MET IN THE PARKS"
On the verge of one of the most transformative seasons in the company's history, the Metropolitan Opera sticks with a three-decade-old tradition this month, offering its popular series of free parks concerts at locations throughout the five boroughs and in New Jersey; there are no fancy costumes or sets to be seen, but the music-making is remarkably genuine. First off this week is **"Rigoletto,"** with Mark Delavan bringing his robust voice and commanding stage presence to the title role. Norah Amsellem, Nancy Fabiola Herrera, José Luis Duval, and Raymond Aceto complete the cast; Joseph Colaneri conducts. (Great Lawn, Central Park. Aug. 23. ♦ Orchard Beach, the Bronx. Aug. 26.) ♦ **"La Traviata"** features Hei-Kyung Hong, Wookyung Kim, and Charles Taylor in the leading roles; Derrick Inouye. (Marine Park, Brooklyn. Aug. 25. ♦ Richmond County Bank Ballpark, Staten Island. Aug. 29.) (All performances are at 8; no tickets required. For more information, call 212-362-6000. Through Sept. 2.)

MUSIC AT THE FRICK COLLECTION: TRIO SETTECENTO
Rachel Barton Pine, a front-rank mainstream violinist who likes to veer off onto unexpected paths—Scottish fiddle music, a Joachim concerto—comes to the most elegant of Manhattan's museum concert spaces as part of her violin-cello-harpsichord trio, dedicated to the music of the eighteenth century. The program features sonatas and other pieces by such composers as Handel, Bach, Corelli, and Stradella. (1 E. 70th St. 212-547-0715. Aug. 24 at 6.)

BARGEMUSIC
Aug. 24 at 7:30: The Orfeo Duo, a violin-and-piano combine who like to mine their repertory from the composer-rich neighborhoods of upper Manhattan, perform a selection of works by Ishamel Wallace, James Blachly, and Elizabeth Adams. ♦ Aug. 25 at 7:30: The pianist Vadim Rubinskiy offers a concert of virtuoso showpieces from the nineteenth century, including Liszt's transcriptions of Schubert's "Erlkönig" and of tunes from Verdi's "Rigoletto." ♦ Aug. 26 at 7:30 and Aug. 27 at 4: The violinist Ilya Kaler, the cellist Eugene Osadchy, and the pianist Daredjan Baya Kakouberi perform piano trios by Mozart, Smetana, and Dvořák (the Trio in F Minor, Op. 65). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

LOCRIAN CHAMBER PLAYERS
The intrepid ensemble, which devotes itself exclusively to music less than a decade old, brings a great veteran, Ned Rorem, into its fold, offering both "Autumn Music" for violin and piano and a suite of recent piano pieces; the free concert also features works by David Dzubay, Michael Shapiro, and David Macdonald. (Riverside Church Performance Space, 91 Claremont Ave. Aug. 24 at 8. No tickets required.)

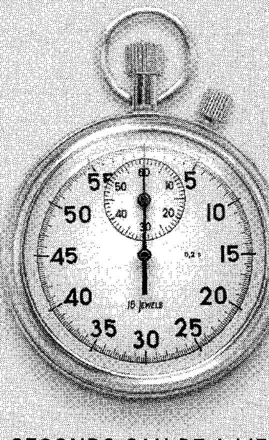
NEW YORK GRAND OPERA
Vincent La Selva, a master of the red-blooded Italian verismo style, conducts a classic double bill—Puccini's **"Suor Angelica"** and Leoncavallo's **"Pagliacci"**—in the alfresco setting of Central Park's Naumburg Band Shell. (Concert Ground, south of 72nd St. Aug. 25 at 7:30. No tickets required.)

OUT OF TOWN

BERKSHIRE OPERA
The hardy summer company returns to full strength with a staged production, with orchestra, of **"Madama Butterfly,"** featuring Sandra Lopez, Mika Shigamatsu, John Bellemer, and Troy Cook in the leading roles; Kathleen Kelly, a musical coach at the Met, is on the podium. (Koussevitzky Arts Center, Berkshire Community College, Pittsfield, Mass. 413-442-0099. Aug. 23 and Aug. 28 at 2 and Aug. 25 at 8.)

TANGLEWOOD
The supreme music festival of the summer closes another resplendent season. Aug. 23 at 8:30: Two old friends, Yo-Yo Ma and Emanuel Ax, team up to perform an all-Beethoven program of music for cello and piano, including the Sonatas Nos. 2 and 5. ♦ Aug. 25 at 8:30: Critics have called the Venezuelan phenom Gustavo Dudamel one of the most talented young conductors in the world—and they are absolutely right. In his Boston Symphony Orchestra début, he conducts works by Bernstein, Falla ("The Three-Cornered Hat"), and, his specialty, Beethoven (the Piano Concerto No. 1 in

©2006 Mercedes-Benz USA, LLC



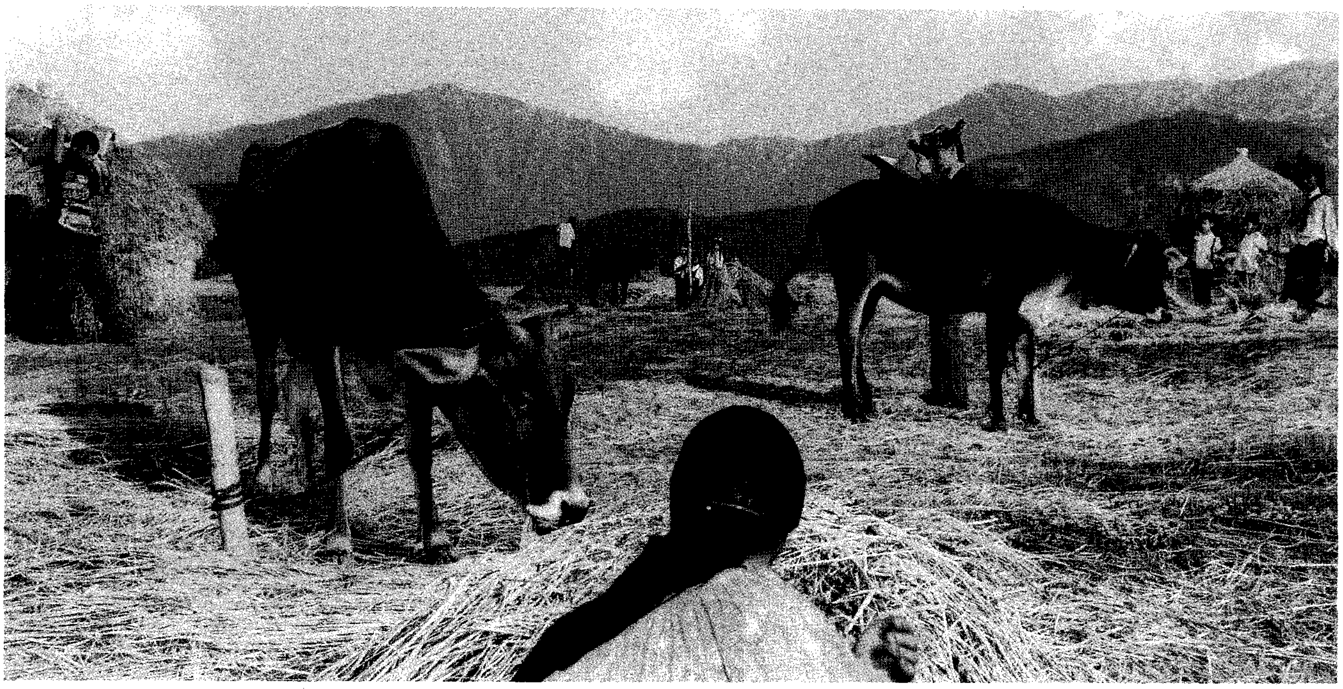
TWO SECONDS CAN BE A LIFETIME.

Time is precious before and after an accident. That's why we created our PRE-SAFE®* and Tele Aid† systems. The PRE-SAFE system can detect potential accidents moments before they occur, and adjusts interior settings for better safety performance. If an air bag or emergency tensioning device deploys, Tele Aid instantly notifies an Emergency Response Specialist. At Mercedes-Benz, safety engineering never stops.

Mercedes-Benz

MBUSA.com

*Only available on S-Class models and 2007 CLS-Class and E-Class models. †Tele Aid equipment is standard on many models and optional on others. Subscription required. Operates only where cellular service and GPS are available.



The Nepal-based photographer Stuart Hawkins's "Field Notes" (2006), at the Zach Feuer gallery, in Chelsea.

C Major, with Imogen Cooper). ♦ Aug. 26 at 8:30: The final surge of Beethoven piano concertos continues with Ax returning to perform the gracious Concerto No. 2 in B-Flat Major; Herbert Blomstedt, a sagacious Swede who has a longtime association with Tanglewood, conducts the concert, which continues with Bruckner's Seventh Symphony. ♦ Aug. 27 at 2:30: Rafael Frühbeck de Burgos, a colorful veteran interpreter of standard repertory, leads the orchestra in the last concert, featuring Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 4 (with Yefim Bronfman) and Symphony No. 7. (Lenox, Mass. 888-266-1200.)

GLIMMERGLASS OPERA

The leading summer opera company of the Northeast, worth a long drive out to the country, ends its season. Aug. 24 and Aug. 26 at 8: The mezzo-soprano Katharine Goeldner plays the ingénue Rosina in Rossini's bubbling **"Barber of Seville"**; David Angus conducts. ♦ Aug. 25 at 8 and Aug. 28 at 1:30: The distinguished American composer Stephen Hartke steps into the operatic realm with **"The Greater Good,"** a treatment of the Maupassant story "Boule de Suif," a bitter tale about the manipulation of a good-hearted prostitute during the Franco-Prussian War. The radiant Caroline Worra takes the leading role; Stewart Robertson, the company's outgoing music director, conducts. ♦ Aug. 26 and Aug. 29 at 1:30: Janáček's **"Jenůfa,"** in a new production by Jonathan Miller, features the charismatic American soprano Maria Kanyova in the title role; Robertson. ♦ Aug. 27 at 1:30: A bouncy production of Gilbert and Sullivan's **"Pirates of Penzance,"** featuring Megan Monaghan, Anthony Laciura, and Chad A. Johnson; Gary Thor Wedow. (Cooperstown, N.Y. 607-547-2255.)

SOUTH SHORE MUSIC SERIES

Antonio Pompa-Baldi, a medalist at the 2001 Van Cliburn Competition, joins Emanuela Friscioni for a concert of works for one and two pianos by Schumann, Brahms (the "Paganini Variations"), Franck, Scriabin, and Poulenc (the Concerto for Two Pianos). (Town Hall, 110 Myrtle Ave., Westport, Conn. 866-776-8745. Aug. 25 at 8.)

MAVERICK CONCERTS

The members of the Rossetti String Quartet bring to the Maverick's woodland hall a dose of rock-star glamour along with their warm and inviting musicianship, performing quartets by Mozart and Piazzolla ("Tango Ballet") before teaming up with the superb Ursula Oppens for Shostakovich's Piano Quintet. (Woodstock, N.Y. 845-679-8217. Aug. 27 at 3.)

MUSIC MOUNTAIN

Three elegant musicians of impeccable pedigree—the Guarneri Quartet's first violinist, Arnold Steinhardt, the Boston Symphony Orchestra's principal cellist, Jules Eskin, and the formidable pianist Lydia Artymiw—gather occasionally to play piano trios. Their upcoming turn at the longtime series's resonant shoebox hall features trios by Beethoven (in E-Flat Major, Op. 70, No. 2), Turina, and Schumann (in F Major, Op. 80). (Falls Village, Conn. 860-824-7126. Aug. 27 at 3.)

MOVIES OPENING

BEERFEST

Jay Chandrasekhar directed this comedy, about two American brothers who go to Munich for Oktoberfest. Opening Aug. 25. (In wide release.)

FRATRICIDE

A drama, directed by Yilmaz Arslan, about Kurdish refugees in the Turkish community in Germany. In Kurdish, German, and Turkish. Opening Aug. 23. (Film Forum.)

HOW TO EAT FRIED WORMS

A family drama about the new boy in fifth grade and his confrontation with a bully. Directed by Bob Dolman. Opening Aug. 25. (In wide release.)

IDLEWILD

André 3000 (André Benjamin) and Big Boi (Antwan A. Patton), of OutKast, star in a musical set in the South in the nineteen-thirties. Co-starring Ving Rhames, Terrence Howard, Faizon Love, Patti LaBelle, Macy Gray, Cicely Tyson, and Ben Vereen. Directed by Bryan Barber. Opening Aug. 25. (In wide release.)

INVINCIBLE

A sports drama starring Mark Wahlberg as a desperate man who attempts to make the Philadelphia Eagles in an open tryout. Directed by Ericson Core. Opening Aug. 25. (In wide release.)

PRINCESAS

A drama from Spain, directed by Fernando León de Aranoa, about two prostitutes who become friends. In Spanish. Opening Aug. 23. (IFC Center.)

QUEENS

In this comedy, directed by Manuel Gómez Pereira, five mothers try to cope with their sons' being gay. In Spanish. Opening Aug. 25. (Angelika Film Center.)

THE QUIET

A thriller, directed by Jamie Babbit, about an orphaned girl who moves in with her godparents and discovers their dark secrets. Starring Camilla Belle and Elisha Cuthbert. Opening Aug. 25. (In wide release.)

SURVIVING EDEN

A mock documentary about the travails of a reality-show winner. Directed by Greg Pritikin and starring Peter Dinklage and Cheri Oteri. Opening Aug. 25. (Village East Cinemas.)

NOW PLAYING

THE AFRICAN QUEEN

An inspired piece of casting brought Humphrey Bogart and Katharine Hepburn together. This is a comedy, a love story, and a tale of adventure, and it is one of the most charming and entertaining movies ever made. The director, John Huston, wrote that the comedy was not present either in the novel by C. S. Forester or in the original screenplay by James Agee, John Collier, and himself, but that it grew out of the relationship of Hepburn and Bogart, who were just naturally funny when they worked together. Hepburn revealed that the picture wasn't going well until Huston came up with the inspiration that she should think of Rosie as Mrs. Roosevelt. After that, Bogart and Hepburn played together with an ease and a humor that make their love affair—the mating of a forbidding, ironclad spinster and a tough, gin-soaked riverboat captain—seem not only inevitable but perfect. The story, set in central Africa in 1914, is so convincingly acted that you may feel a bit jarred at the end; after the lovers have brought the boat, the African Queen, over dangerous rapids to torpedo a German battleship, Huston seems to stop taking the movie seriously. (Peter Viertel, who worked on the dialogue while the company was on location in Africa, wrote "White Hunter, Black Heart"—one of the best of all moviemaking novels—about his experiences with Huston.) Released in 1951.—*Pauline Kael* (Museum of Modern Art; Aug. 23.)

THE BEALES OF GREY GARDENS

Albert Maysles has put together a companion film to "Grey Gardens," the 1975 cult-classic documentary that he made with his brother, David, about Edith Bouvier Beale and her middle-aged daughter, Little Edie, the famously reclusive relatives of Jackie Kennedy Onassis who lived in a dilapidated cat-and-raccoon-infested Southampton manse. This loose assemblage of outtakes, while retaining the Maysleses' beautiful, intelligent cinematography and patient pacing, sheds light on the Beales' day-to-day life, giving them a more realistic context, but some of the original film's magic and mystery is gone: the Beales still seem crazy, but not quite as much. Fans will find satisfaction in this film, which plays like something of an homage to Little Edie, with her seemingly endless supply of fifties-fabulous outfits and head scarves. It is a revelation and a relief to watch her address rumors of her schizophrenia and shamelessly flirt with the filmmakers, in the presence of whose relentless attention she so guilelessly comes alive.—*Shauna Lyon* (IFC Center; Aug. 25-26.)

BELLS ARE RINGING

Dean Martin, at his musical-comedy peak, is both intuitive and modulated as a blocked playwright in this classy adaptation of the Betty Comden–Adolph Green–Jule Styne Broadway hit; and Judy Holliday's empathy and warmth put over the plot, about an answering-service operator who can't resist trying to improve the lives of her customers. The farce complications are wispy and silly: they involve bookies who are using classical-music titles as a code and a couple of overzealous vice investigators. But the (mostly) fetching score includes "The Party's Over" and "Just in Time"—Martin and Holliday's duet on the latter is a mellow romantic classic. Vincente Minnelli makes use of the wide screen with graceful, fluid movement, and he helps Martin anchor his usual breeziness with just the right amount of anxiety. (Martin, like his playwright character, knew the fear of going solo after working with a partner.) Released in 1960.—*Michael Sragow* (Walter Reade; Aug. 27.)

CONVERSATIONS WITH OTHER WOMEN

If audiences are split down the middle on the merits of Hans Canosa's film, that will be a fitting response. From beginning to end, the movie itself is divided in two, with one half of the screen going mostly to Helena Bonham Carter and the other being hogged by Aaron Eckhart. They play a pair of wedding guests who meet in New York and spend at least half the night together; in the course of their discussions, and their entwinings, it becomes clear that they were serious old flames and that what the film recounts is a rekindling. This makes it too sad to be a fling, and the couple's time together feels increasingly joyless. Canosa wrings as much drama as he can from his fifty-fifty screen, and the actors respond well to the camera's nagging inspection (which gives a listener as much attention as a person delivering lines), yet by the end the device feels helplessly claustrophobic—worthy of something freer and fresher, perhaps, than a one-night stand in a hotel.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 8/7 & 14/06.) (62nd and Broadway and Sunshine Cinema.)

THE DESCENT

A group of female friends gather together for their yearly spelunking adventure and descend into an uncharted Appalachian cave, where they soon find themselves lost inside a maze of pitch-black tunnels and realize that they are not alone. The first half of the film is thrilling, with the director, Neil Marshall, keenly conveying claustrophobia and disorientation in dark, forbidding places. And the actors, particularly Natalie Mendoza, as the group's unofficial leader, are primed with an athletic prowess that's convincingly heroic. When the film turns horrific in the second half, the group is in splinters, being picked off by albino monsters that are semi-human and blind as bats. With audacious lighting (huge portions of the screen are filmed in murky darkness) and fantastically grimy sets (built on a soundstage in England), Marshall constructs a shrewdly assaulting atmosphere. Bloody mayhem has rarely been so anxiously inspired.—*Bruce Diones* (In wide release.)

FACTOTUM

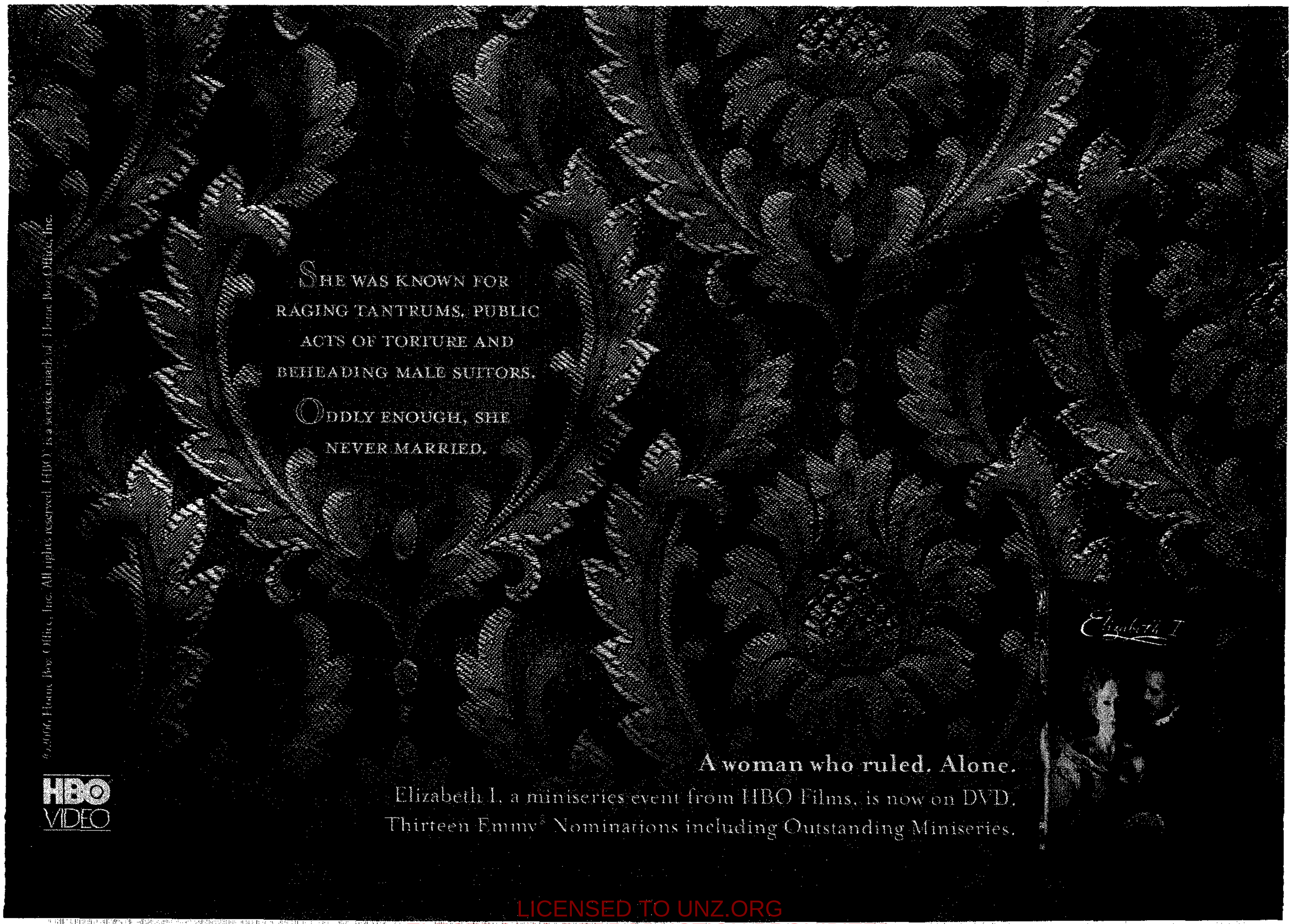
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (IFC Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

FREUD

In this 1962 bio-pic, John Huston lucidly conjures the revolution that occurred in the drawing rooms and medical offices of fin-de-siècle Vienna. The brilliant and profound script—which Huston commissioned from Jean-Paul Sartre, who insisted on remaining uncredited after its revision by Charles Kaufman and Wolfgang Reinhardt—brings to life the discovery of unconscious desires, the interpretation of dreams, the free-association method, transference, and, of course, the Freudian slip, and reserves the greatest drama for the notion of childhood sexuality and the Oedipus complex. Montgomery Clift burns with a fierce intelligence as the young practitioner with a titanic imagination, and Susannah York, as Cecily Koertner, his most troubling neurotic, movingly conveys the tormenting price of self-knowledge. While in different hands (Orson Welles's, for instance) these radical themes could have inspired more hallucinatory and probing, inward images, Huston nonetheless evokes an apt sense of wonder, admiration, and awe.—*Richard Brody* (Museum of Modern Art; Aug. 27.)

HALF NELSON

The young Canadian actor Ryan Gosling is quietly charismatic as Dan Dunne, a schoolteacher in a tough section of Brooklyn who knows how to teach history to his thirteen- and fourteen-year-old African-American students. Dunne is smart and dedicated, but he's also freebasing cocaine. When a girl in his class, Drey (Shareeka Epps), catches him in the act, a bond develops between them. The movie, made with a handheld camera by the team of Ryan Fleck and Anna Boden, is alert to the tensions in the two characters' lives and the raffish neighborhood milieu, but one comes away from it thinking that the filmmakers have coddled their hero. He is, after all, failing not only himself but the students who depend on him. The sources of Dunne's addiction are obscure, but "Half Nelson" nevertheless builds his problems into a parable of the misfortunes of liberalism.—*David Denby* (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)



SHE WAS KNOWN FOR
RAGING TANTRUMS, PUBLIC
ACTS OF TORTURE AND
BEHEADING MALE SUITORS.

ODDLY ENOUGH, SHE
NEVER MARRIED.

A woman who ruled. Alone.

Elizabeth I, a miniseries event from HBO Films, is now on DVD.
Thirteen Emmy® Nominations including Outstanding Miniseries.

HBO VIDEO

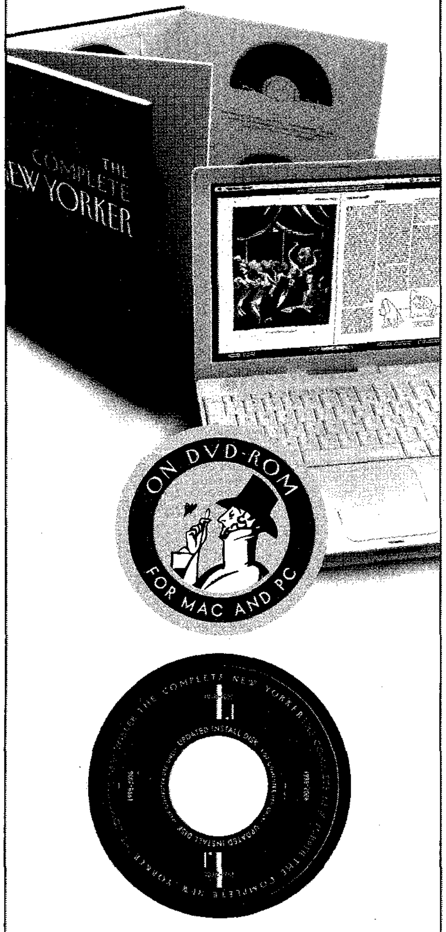
© 2006 Home Box Office, Inc. All rights reserved. HBO® is a service mark of Home Box Office, Inc.

THE
COMPLETE
NEW YORKER

Now updated
through April, 2006.

4,164 issues.
Half a million pages.
Easy to search, browse,
read, and print.

Every article, every cartoon,
every illustration, every
advertisement, exactly as it
appeared on the printed
page, in full color.



Not available in stores.
Order online at
thenewyorkerstore.com

JOHN TUCKER MUST DIE
John Tucker (Jesse Metcalfe) is the star athlete and irresistible heartthrob of a big suburban high school. Three girls he plays around with find out about each other and help a fourth, the nondescript Kate (Brittany Snow), to become the surrogate seductress who will break his heart. The promising setup is botched in execution: the script lacks a feel for the sound and the substance of teen life and the young performers are devoid of spirit. When the only spark of life is provided by Jenny McCarthy, as Kate's serial-dating mother, it's trouble. Next to this terminally witless fare, "Mean Girls" is Shakespeare.—*R.B.* (In wide release.)

Camilla Belle and Elisha Cuthbert star in "The Quiet," directed by Jamie Babbit.

ANA JUAN

LITTLE MISS SUNSHINE
A charming, independently made family comedy about a winner-take-all society—America—that is driving its citizens crazy. Its hero and victim, Richard Hoover (Greg Kinnear), is a motivational speaker who has invented a nine-step program for success. His seven-year-old daughter, Olive (Abigail Breslin), is entering a Little Miss Sunshine contest; his stepson, Dwayne (Paul Dano), has a private dream in which he is a Nietzschean Übermensch; his wife's brother (Steve Carell), whom the family has taken in, is the No. 1 Proust scholar in the country but has made a fool of himself over a male graduate student who has leaped into the bed of the No. 2 Proust scholar. Is winning everything? The writer, Michael Arndt, and the husband-and-wife directing team, Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris, narrowly avoid the family-comedy pitfalls of whimsy and mush, but Arndt has a good ear for domestic irritations and the acting is just tough enough to keep us off balance. With Alan Arkin and Toni Collette as the family's realists.—*D.D.* (7/31/06) (In wide release.)

LOULOU
After a satisfying one-night stand, Nelly (Isabelle Huppert), bourgeois but diffident, leaves the slight, cultured André, her boyfriend of three years and her boss, for the eponymous stud and petty criminal (Gérard Depardieu). In this raw melodrama from 1980, directed by Maurice Pialat, all three fall prey to their own delusions: Nelly can't entirely give up the practical security to which she's accustomed; André, despite the horrific breakup, thinks he's big enough to keep Nelly in his life and perhaps to win her back; and Loulou, a tangle of animal energy and cocky sloth, won't change his overgrown-delinquent ways, even when Nelly gets pregnant. Pialat goes at these wounded souls with a daring aggression and breaks their story down to shards of impassioned action. Though he conveys the warmth, the frustration, and the violence of working-class life, his main interest is to provoke a maximum of intense, almost unbearable emotion. In French.—*R.B.* (BAM; Aug. 26.)

MIAMI VICE
Michael Mann, returning to the sunshine-bright and overripe material of the old TV show (he was executive producer of the series), hasn't hidden the sun, exactly, but the general tone is darker, danker, dirtier, and much more violent. The euphemisms of television have vanished—the blood hits the wall with a splat—and the material is now grim and self-important. Colin Farrell is Detective Sonny Crockett, and Jamie Foxx is Detective Lieutenant Ricardo Tubbs. These are serious fellows; they don't engage in debonair lounge-lizard repartee—they hardly engage at all (Farrell is sullen and withdrawn). Pretending to be big-time drug transporters, the boys travel to Haiti and Colombia and insinuate themselves into a drug-smuggling ring. Mann's narrative method is terse, abrupt, and fragmentary, and his dialogue consists mainly of cop-and-drug-dealer jargon spit out of the corner of someone's mouth. The movie is hard to follow, but it has its moments of licentious pleasure, especially when Farrell and Gong Li, who plays the drug kingpin's mistress, take off for Cuba, speeding across the Caribbean in a twin-engine Super Cat.—*D.D.* (7/31/06) (In wide release.)

MONSTER HOUSE
Directed by Gil Kenan and produced by Robert Zemeckis and Steven Spielberg, this animated horror film, about a group of kids terrorized by a house that gobbles up all who pass by, has the scares and the wit of a great amusement-park ride. The motion-capture technology that Zemeckis developed for "The Polar Express" (the actors are filmed and then exaggeratedly computer-animated) is even better suited to this creepy story. The screenplay is a boilerplate kids' film (the adults are clueless, and it's up to the children to save the day), but the snappy dialogue pops with a child's-eye view of adult conversation, and the thrills—and there are many—are wonderfully scary; they bring a smile after the fright. With the grimacing, motion-captured face of Kathleen Turner as the monster house.—*B.D.* (In wide release.)

PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: DEAD MAN'S CHEST
This is the second part of a trilogy, Disney having decided that there were dense thematic issues, not to mention narrative niceties, that could not be constrained within a single "Pirates" film; any financial consideration was, of course, entirely secondary. Once again, we accompany Captain Jack Sparrow (Johnny Depp) as he pursues his fate—or the needle of his compass—across the waters. Keira Knightley resumes her romantic role, as does Orlando Bloom, although his presence is not exactly strong enough to rip a hole in the screen. The director, Gore Verbinski, may

marshal the action into some kind of order, but the show is truly run (and strung out) by the special effects; why else would a writhing sea monster, having munched on one ship, come back for a second helping? If the film works, it is largely because of Depp, whose performance owes more and more to Mary Pickford and less to Douglas Fairbanks. Depp continues to dominate the proceedings, aided in this instance by Bill Nighy, who—together with his animated beard—breathes life into the deceased Davy Jones.—*A.L.* (7/24/06) (In wide release.)

QUINCEAÑERA

The fifteenth-birthday celebration, a rite of passage for Latinas, is the springboard for this drama of transformation and urban gentrification in the Echo Park neighborhood of Los Angeles. The story concerns Magdalena (the newcomer Emily Rios, in a charming performance), who gets pregnant and is sent to live with her great-uncle (Chalo González) and her semi-delinquent gay cousin (Jesse Garcia). The writer-directors, Richard Glatzer and Wash Westmoreland, avoid histrionics and bring a gentler vitality to the conflicts of changing mores in the Latino community. Their colorful, optimistic view of the characters' complex lives is refreshingly unsentimental, and their almost giddy, bare-bones pride in the film's low-budget look is matter-of-factly cheering.—*B.D.* (In wide release.)

ROCKY ROAD TO DUBLIN

In 1967, inspired by the French New Wave and by the politics of the day, Peter Lennon brought the great cinematographer Raoul Coutard to Ireland to film a documentary about the unhealed wounds of the nationalist revolution. Interviews with journalists, sportsmen, clergymen, writers, and artists (including John Huston, who had taken Irish citizenship) reveal the paradoxes of a revolt that threw off the British yoke only to promote what to many seemed a dependence on the United States, and a fight for freedom that yielded to submission to religious authorities. The film's greatest strength, however, is its atmosphere: Coutard's images capture the moods and shades of inner life, and the music—filmed and recorded live in pubs—conveys the passion and the melancholy of dreams still deferred.—*R.B.* (Anthology Film Archives; Aug. 23.)

SCOOP

In Woody Allen's latest, Woody is a cut-rate magician known as the Great Splendini, and Scarlett Johansson, who is charming, is his protégée, Sondra, a college-newspaper reporter who gets a tip on a big story from a dead journalist (Ian McShane) conjured up by Splendini. The conceit is barely tolerable, but it gets the movie under way, and Woody and Scarlett are fitfully amusing as an unlikely pair of sleuths who run around London quarrelling and putting people on in posh houses and private clubs. To enjoy it, however, you have to love Woody's fumbling, stumbling delivery, with its many hesitations and sudden explosions of worry or distaste. At the age of seventy, he's certainly not hiding his crotchets. Hugh Jackman plays a powerful man who may or may not have committed a string of murders.—*D.D.* (In wide release.)

STEAMBOAT BILL, JR.

One of the least known of the Buster Keaton features, yet it possibly ranks right at the top. It is certainly the most bizarrely Freudian of his adventures, dealing with a tiny son's attempt to prove himself to his huge, burly, rejecting father. Ernest Torrence is the father—a tough Mississippi-steamboat captain, who does not conceal his disgust when Junior (Keaton) arrives to join him, nattily dressed in bell-bottoms, a polka-dot tie, and a beret. When the father is in jail, Keaton tries to hand him a gigantic loaf of bread containing tools for breaking out, but the father doesn't understand what's in it and refuses the bread; Keaton mutters, "My father is ashamed of my baking." The film features a memorable comic cyclone, and a peerless (and much imitated) sequence in which Keaton tries on hats and changes personality with each, becoming a series of movie stars of the period. Silent. Released in 1928.—*P.K.* (Film Forum; Aug. 28.)

TALLADEGA NIGHTS: THE BALLAD OF RICKY BOBBY

This ambitious, overblown comedy offers elaborate imitations of humor but is rarely funny. The two-part title alone hints at trouble: Will Ferrell throws his ample comic weight at the broad target of Nascar racing, and also at the sodden, sentimental tale of a racing legend's rise, fall, and rise. The result is a garish, loud parody of a garish, loud world, as well as

---

TABLES FOR TWO
SFOGLIA

1402 Lexington Ave., at 92nd St. (212-831-1402)—The northwest corner of Ninety-second Street and Lexington Avenue is one of those restaurant Bermuda Triangles. Café Lex, Lex 92, and La Collina have perished there, unfortunate disappearances in what is already a gustatory wasteland. Into both breaches steps Sfoglia, whose chef-owners, Ron Suhanosky and his wife, Colleen Marnell-Suhanosky, have offered some solutions to the dead-corner/lame-neighborhood problem. The first was to move the entrance, against their architects' advice, from avenue to street—a feng-shui-ish maneuver that helped transform the dining area from disconcerting storefront to hospitable country kitchen. The other was to make their restaurant really good. Sfoglia got its start on Nantucket, another culinary backwater, in 2000. The couple (Ron is the chef, and Colleen is the pastry chef, whose *torta del giorno* must—and should—be ordered at the beginning of your meal) spent years plotting this expansion to the Big Island. They had the bold idea not only of making a living at it but of kicking off a restaurant renaissance, or naissance, in the Upper East Side's upper reaches, where they'd decided to live, and where many of their Nantucket regulars live as well.

Sfoglia's atmosphere is rustic and trattorian: rough-hewn tables (which you might share with strangers), mismatched plates, dish towels for napkins, tumblers for wine (stemware is available upon request), and, in lieu of gladiolus, colanders full of lemons or potatoes. After several months without a liquor license, during which they poured your wine as though it were theirs (i.e., with alacrity), the Suhanoskys got one a few weeks ago; they intend to start serving homemade limoncello. The menu changes every couple of weeks, according to what the farmers bring to town. And concoctions that may seem, in the reading, to be slightly ridiculous turn out, in the eating, to be perfectly serious (but not too self-important)—on a recent visit, there was a risotto with blueberries and mushrooms, and a sea-urchin spaghetti with raisins and pine nuts. Such successful experiments are hard to come by in the veal-shank Zip Codes. A few weeks later, the caprese—heirloom tomatoes, mozzarella, pesto—came with wedges of watermelon. It was very red, and it worked. (Open Mondays through Saturdays for lunch and dinner. Entrées $16-$26.)

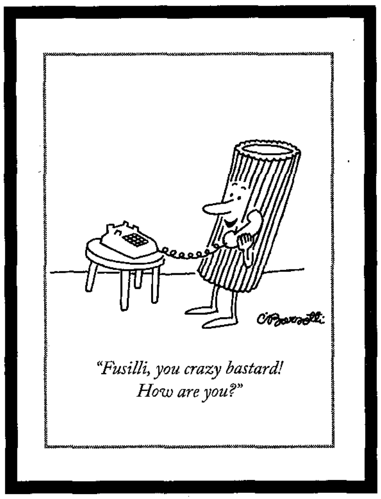
—*Nick Paumgarten*

Advertisement

CARTOON PRINTS

"Never, ever, think outside the box."

Leo Cullum, 1998



"Fusilli, you crazy bastard!
How are you?"

Charles Barsotti, 1994

Virtually every cartoon ever published in *The New Yorker.* Order online at The Cartoon Bank.

Search by artist, topic, or date.

Framed $150 small, $295 large

Matted: $125 small, $250 large

WWW.CARTOONBANK.COM

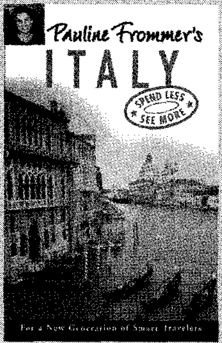
1-800-897-8666

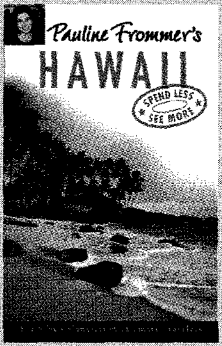
ADVERTISEMENT

bookmarks

The *New Yorker* Promotion Department invites you to look for these releases.

SPEND LESS, SEE MORE.





This is the philosophy behind the new Pauline Frommer's Guides. These guides, edited by the travel expert Pauline Frommer (who also happens to be the daughter of Arthur Frommer), show travellers how to truly experience a culture, meet locals, and save money along the way.

For vacation tips, hot deals, and podcasts, go to Frommers.com.

Frommer's®
A Branded Imprint of WILEY
Now you know.

Frommer's is a registered trademark of Arthur Frommer, used by Wiley under exclusive license.

a treacly fable of family togetherness that drags on like a never-ending pit stop. Sacha Baron Cohen, as Jean Girard, a gay French existentialist Formula One driver who challenges Ricky Bobby, adds little to the lines that the writers—Adam McKay, who also directed, and Ferrell—gave him, and the script must have seemed much funnier in the office (and the bloopers that accompany the closing credits prove it). One scene, a family dinner where Ricky Bobby says grace in his own unique way, is memorably sharp, and Greg Germann and Molly Shannon bring surprising pathos to small roles as a race-team owner and his alcoholic wife.—*R.B.* (In wide release.)

13 TZAMETI

A perspiring first film from the young Georgian director Gela Babluani. Just over a decade ago, Babluani moved to France; although the movie takes place there, it feels far from settled, and you keep asking yourself about the fears that he may have imported from his native land. His pale-faced brother Georges plays a builder who, whether from boredom or bravado, assumes the identity of a deceased client, plunging into an adventure whose outcome he cannot guess. It begins like a Simenon tale, in a quiet seaside location, yet becomes a twisted fairy tale in the depths of a wood. What unravels there should be beyond belief, but such is Babluani's grip on events, and so ominous is the black-and-white photography, that what might have seemed a nasty contrivance comes across as a calm investigation of fate. In French.—*A.L.* (8/7 & 14/06) (Film Forum.)

WORLD TRADE CENTER

Rushing downtown on the morning of September 11, 2001, a group of Port Authority cops, including Sergeant John McLoughlin (Nicolas Cage) and the rookie Will Jimeno (Michael Peña), encounter a hallucinatory storm of paper drifting down from the Twin Towers. Later, trapped in the rubble of the collapsing buildings, McLoughlin and Jimeno provide each other with whatever support and consolation they are capable of, while, at home, their families respond to the catastrophe and their uncertainty about the men with convincing degrees of fear, bravado, panic, and rage. Oliver Stone's aesthetically conservative 9/11 movie is a work of considerable power that captures the oppressive physical strangeness and exhausting emotional demands of that day. With Maria Bello as McLoughlin's wife, the cool-headed Donna, and Maggie Gyllenhaal as Jimeno's wife, the volatile, more demanding Allison. The movie was conceived by the late producer Debra Hill and written by Andrea Berloff.—*D.D.* (8/21/06) (In wide release.)

YOU, ME AND DUPREE

Kate Hudson and the heavy-browed Matt Dillon, who don't really belong together as actors, get married; the newlyweds take into their house a life-loving bum, played by Owen Wilson, who proceeds to wreck the union. The basic premise is slightly offensive: the Wilson character is presented as a test of everyone's humanity, but he's actually a pain in the neck whom anyone in their right mind, and especially newlyweds, would immediately throw out. Wilson runs around bare-assed and is meant to be lovable, which may be a jerk's last illusion. The direction, by Anthony and Joe Russo, is slightly off in every scene—perhaps because the material never made sense in the first place. With Michael Douglas as Hudson's sourpuss father.—*D.D.* (In wide release.)

Also Playing

ACCEPTED: In wide release. **BARNYARD:** In wide release. **THE ILLUSIONIST:** In wide release. **SNAKES ON A PLANE:** In wide release. **STEP UP:** In wide release. **TRUST THE MAN:** In wide release.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES

32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—"NewFilmmakers Presents." Aug. 23 at 8: "The Watershed" (2005, Mary Trunk). ♦ In revival. Aug. 23-24 at 7 and 9:30: "The Last Movie" (1971, Dennis Hopper). ♦ Aug. 23 at 9:30: "Rocky Road to Dublin" (†) and "The Making of 'Rocky Road to Dublin' " (2004, Paul Duane). ♦ Aug. 24 at 8: "The Candidate" (1980, Stefan Aust, Alexander von Eschwege, Alexander Kluge, and Volker Schlöndorff; in German). ♦ Aug. 25 at 7:30: Scientific films, including "The Seahorse" (1934, Jean Painlevé). ♦ Aug. 25 at 8 and Aug. 26-27 at 6 and 8:30: "Saint Jack" (1979, Peter Bogdanovich). ♦ "Essential Cinema." Aug. 26 at 6:30: Short films by Georges Méliès, Program 1 (1899-1907). ♦ Aug. 27 at 5:30: Short films by Georges Méliès, Program 2 (1904-09). ♦ Special screenings. Aug. 26 at 8: Short films by Robert Todd (1999-2004). ♦ Aug. 27 at 7: "Lunch with Fela" (2005, Abraham Ravett).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS

30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—"Cinemachat with Elliott Stein." Aug. 23 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "The Two-Headed Spy" (1958, André De Toth). The 6:50 screening is followed by a discussion with Stein. ♦ "French Leading Men." All films are in French. Aug. 25 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Série Noire" (1979, Alain Corneau). ♦ Aug. 26 at 2, 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Loulou" (†). ♦ Aug. 27 at 3 and 7:15: "The Mother and the Whore" (1973, Jean Eustache). ♦ The films of Sam Peckinpah. Aug. 28 at 6:50 and 9:15: "The Osterman Weekend" (1983). ♦ Aug. 29 at 6:50 and 9:30: "Pat Garrett and Billy the Kid" (1973).

FILM FORUM

W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—"Summer Swashbucklers." Aug. 23 at 1, 5:15, and 9:30: "The Exile" (1947, Max Ophuls). ♦ Aug. 23 at 3:05 and 7:20: "Don Q, Son of Zorro" (1925, Donald Crisp; silent). ♦ Aug. 24 at 1, 5:10, and 9:20: "The Iron Mask" (1929, Allan Dwan). ♦ Aug. 24 at 2:55 and 7:05: "The Count of Monte Cristo" (1934, Rowland V. Lee). ♦ Through Aug. 31: The films of Frank Tashlin. Aug. 25-27 and Aug. 29 at 1:30, 3:30, 5:30, 7:30, and 9:30: "The Girl Can't Help It" (1956). ♦ Through Sept. 25: The films of Buster Keaton. All films are silent. Aug. 28 at 2, 4:50, 7:40, and 10:20: "Steamboat Bill, Jr." (†). ♦ Aug. 28 at 3:30, 6:20, and 9:10: "The Boat" (1921), "My Wife's Relations" (1922), and "Daydreams" (1922).

IFC CENTER

323 Sixth Ave., at W. 3rd St. (212-924-7771)—"Waverly Midnights." Aug. 25-26: "The Beales of Grey Gardens" (†). ♦ The films of Akira Kurosawa. Aug. 25-27 at noon: "Throne of Blood" (1955; in Japanese).

LINCOLN PLAZA CINEMAS

Broadway at 63rd St. (212-757-2280)—The films of Pedro Almodóvar. Call for show times. Aug. 23-24: "Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown" (1988; in Spanish). ♦ Aug. 25-29: "All About My Mother" (1999; in Spanish, Catalan, and English).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—Through Sept. 22: "The Huston Family: 75 Years on Film." Aug. 23 at 6:15: "Swamp Water" (1941, Jean Renoir). ♦ Aug. 23 at 8:15: "The African Queen" (†). ♦ Aug. 24 at 6:30: "The Maltese Falcon" (1941, John Huston). ♦ Aug. 24 at 8:30: "The Grifters" (1990, Stephen Frears). ♦ Aug. 25 at 4:30: "A Walk with Love and Death" (1969, John Huston). ♦ Aug. 25 at 6:30: "Agnes Browne" (1999, Anjelica Huston). ♦ Aug. 25 at 8:30: "The Dead" (1987, John Huston). ♦ Aug. 26 at 2: "Law and Order" (1932, Edward L. Cahn). ♦ Aug. 26 at 3:45: "The Shanghai Gesture" (1941, Josef von Sternberg). ♦ Aug. 26 at 6: "The Night of the Iguana" (1964, John Huston). ♦ Aug. 27 at 1:30: "The Cardinal" (1963, Otto Preminger). ♦ Aug. 27 at 5: "The Kremlin Letter" (1970, John Huston). ♦ Aug. 28 at 5:30: "Mr. North" (1988, Danny Huston). ♦ Aug. 28 at 7:30: "Freud" (†).

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—"Independence World Cinema Showcase." Aug. 25 at 7:30: "A Letter from Greenpoint" (2004, Jonas Mekas), introduced by the director. ♦ The films of Mary Pickford. Aug. 26-27 at 2: "Behind the Scenes" (1914, James Kirkwood; silent). ♦ Aug. 26-27 at 4: "The Little American" (1917, Cecil B. De Mille; silent). ♦ "Repertory Nights." Aug. 26-27 at 6:30: "Godzilla" (1954, Ishiro Honda; in Japanese).

PIONEER THEATRE

155 E. 3rd St. (212-591-0434)—"Vloggers Unite!" Aug. 23 at 7: "TheBurg.TV" (2006, Kathleen Grace). ♦

Aug. 23-29 at 9: "LOL" (2006, Joe Swanberg). ♦ Aug. 25 at 7: "Scratchvideo.TV" (2006, Charlene Rule). ♦ Aug. 25 at 11: Short Internet films by Jeffrey Max. ♦ Aug. 26 at 6:30: "Young American Bodies" (2006, Swanberg and Kris Williams). ♦ Aug. 26 at 11: "Man-Hole" (2006, Mark Harris). ♦ Aug. 27 at 7: "PAN-tasia," short films.

SUNSHINE CINEMA
143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—"Sunshine@ Midnight." Aug. 25-26: "The Nightmare Before Christmas" (1993, Henry Selick).

THALIA THEATRE
Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. (212-864-5400)—In revival. Aug. 26-27 at 5: "On the Town" (1949, Stanley Donen and Gene Kelly). ♦ Aug. 26-27 at 7: "Silk Stockings" (1957, Rouben Mamoulian).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—"Golden Silents." Aug. 23 at 7:30: "A Cottage on Dartmoor" (1929, Anthony Asquith; silent). ♦ Russian science fiction. Aug. 24 at 1:30, 5, and 8:15: "The Amphibian Man" (1961, Gennadi Kazansky and Vladimir Chebotarev). ♦ Aug. 24 at 3:15 and 6:45: "Cosmic Voyage" (1936, Vasili Zhuravlev). ♦ The films of Judy Holliday. Aug. 25 at 2, Aug. 28 at 4, and Aug. 29 at 6:15: "Adam's Rib" (1949, George Cukor). ♦ Aug. 25 at 4:15 and Aug. 28 at 6:15: "Something for the Boys" (1944, Lewis Seiler). ♦ Aug. 25 at 6:15, Aug. 26 at 4, and Aug. 29 at 1:30: "Born Yesterday" (1950, Cukor). The Aug. 25 screening will be introduced by Holliday's son, Jonathan Oppenheim. ♦ Aug. 25 at 8:45 and Aug. 26 at 6:15: "It Should Happen to You" (1954, Cukor). The Aug. 25 screening will be introduced by Will Holtzman, Holliday's biographer. ♦ Aug. 26 at 2 and Aug. 28 at 8:15: "Greenwich Village" (1944, Walter Lang). ♦ Aug. 26 at 8:15: "The Marrying Kind" (1952, Cukor), introduced by the film critic Elliott Stein. ♦ Aug. 27 at 1:30: "Winged Victory" (1944, Cukor), introduced by Kitty Carlisle Hart. ♦ Aug. 27 at 4: "Full of Life" (1956, Richard Quine). ♦ Aug. 27 at 6: "Bells Are Ringing" (†), introduced by Oppenheim. ♦ Aug. 27 at 9: "Solid Gold Cadillac" (1956, Quine). ♦ Aug. 28 at 2 and Aug. 29 at 8:30: "Phffft!" (1954, Mark Robson).

READINGS AND TALKS

BLUESTOCKINGS
The radical bookstore and activism center on the Lower East Side presents Joe Meno, whose latest novel, "The Boy Detective Fails," looks at the fate of a child prodigy. He'll be joined by the writers Todd Dills, Mickey Hess, and T Cooper. (172 Allen St., between Stanton and Rivington Sts. No tickets necessary. Aug. 23 at 7.)

JENNIFER EGAN
The author of "Look at Me" offers selections from her new novel, "The Keep." (Rocky Sullivan's, Lexington Ave. between 28th and 29th Sts. No tickets necessary. Aug. 23 at 8.)

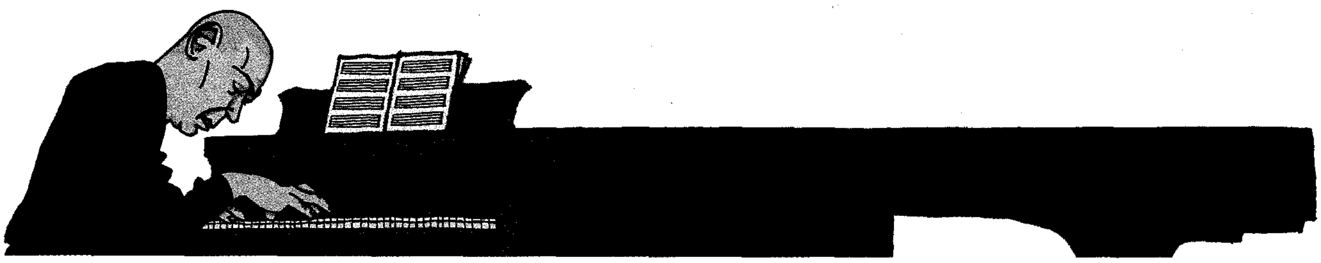
192 BOOKS
"The Collected Stories of Amy Hempel," which was published earlier this year, gathers more than two decades of sharp prose in a single volume. Hempel reads from it on Aug. 24 at 7. Joining her is Karen Shepard, whose latest novel, "Don't I Know You?," revolves around an unsolved murder on the Upper West Side circa 1976. (Tenth Ave. at 21st St. No tickets necessary.)

JONAS MEKAS
The long-established local filmmaker speaks at the Museum of the Moving Image on the occasion of the screening of his latest video, "A Letter from Greenpoint." His 1949-2003 short film "Williamsburg, Brooklyn" will also be shown. (35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria. 718-784-0077. Aug. 25 at 6:30.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

"LA CASITA"
The Lincoln Center Out of Doors festival celebrates the oral poetry of Latin America and beyond with a five-day run of music, dance, and verse. The main stage is at Lincoln Center, but "the little house" is also travelling to the Bronx, Queens, and the Lower East Side. The performances are as follows. Aug. 26 at 2: The poets John Farris, Roger Bonair Agard, and Sheila Maldonado are joined by the musicians Imani Uzuri and Monika Jalili. (South Plaza, Lincoln Center.) Aug. 27 at 2: The poets Ishmael Reed and Victor Hernandez. With the actress and performance artist Gha'il Rhodes Benjamin. (South Plaza.) Aug. 28 at 5:30: Reed, Hernandez, and Benjamin visit the Bronx. (Teatro Pregones, 571-575 Walton Ave.) Aug. 29 at 5:30: Agard joins the playwright and mixed-media artist Letitia Guillory at the Langston Hughes Library, in Queens. (101-01 Northern Blvd.) Aug. 30 at 5:30: Maldonado, Jalili, and Benjamin wrap up the series at La Plaza Cultural, on the Lower East Side. (Avenue C at 9th St.) (For more information, visit www.lincolncenter.org.)

HALF-MARATHON
New York City's first half-marathon is scheduled for Aug. 27. It starts with a loop of Central Park and finishes up in Battery Park City. More than ten thousand runners are expected to compete. (www.nyrr.org.)



Ivo Pogorelich, at the Metropolitan Museum.

JASHAR AWAN

ON THE HORIZON

MOVIES
WHAT LOLA WANTS

Sept. 8–Oct. 8

Josef von Sternberg, who grew up in New York, directed the first major German sound film, "The Blue Angel," which starred Marlene Dietrich as the seductress Lola Lola. Their subsequent collaborations, onscreen and off, are the stuff of legend. Moving Image presents a nearly complete retrospective of Sternberg's work, from his first film, "The Salvation Hunters," to his last, "The Saga of Anatahan." (718-784-0077.)

THE THEATRE
SECOND BANANA

Sept. 19

The ventriloquist Jay Johnson brings "Jay Johnson: The Two and Only!" to Broadway's Helen Hayes Theatre. Johnson's comedy, which mixes autobiographical and vaudevillian material and features several puppets, débuted at the Atlantic Theatre Company in 2004. (212-239-6200.)

NIGHT LIFE
TEAMING UP

Sept. 25–26

The Raconteurs, the garage-rock group featuring Jack White, of the White Stripes, and his pal Brendan Benson, come to Roseland. (212-307-7171.)

ART
PABLO HONEY

Sept. 28–Jan. 28

The Whitney's "Picasso and American Art" promises to document not so much anxiety of influence as the exuberance with which American artists embraced and responded to the Spanish master's work, with a demonstration of how Picasso's versatility and virtuosity inspired de Kooning, Pollock, Johns, Warhol, and Lichtenstein, to name just a few. (800-944-8639.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
PRODIGAL SON

Oct. 26

Ivo Pogorelich, the Moscow-trained pianist who is as famous for his eccentricity as for his excellence, will offer his first New York performance in a decade at the Metropolitan Museum, a recital of solo works by Schumann (the "Symphonic Études") and Chopin (two Nocturnes, and the Sonata No. 3 in B Minor). (212-570-3949.)

advertisement

WINE.DINE.DONATE

now a dinner party for 8 actually feeds 800

Epicurious.com is proud to introduce Wine.Dine.Donate, a series of grand restaurant dinners and intimate home dinner parties to support America's Second Harvest's quest to end childhood hunger. Join us to savor the exquisite skills of chefs Michael Mina, Shawn McClain, Michael Schlow, and Kent Rathbun. You can also cook for your friends at home using our delicious monthly menus from these prominent chefs. Every plate or party will raise money. Together we can help ensure no child goes home hungry.

You'll find event information, menus, forums,
and party hosting details at epicurious.com/donate

epicurious.com

SPONSORED BY

BERTOLLI DAL 1865 *Frozen Dinners*

hp invent

Travel channel

THE
NEW YORKER

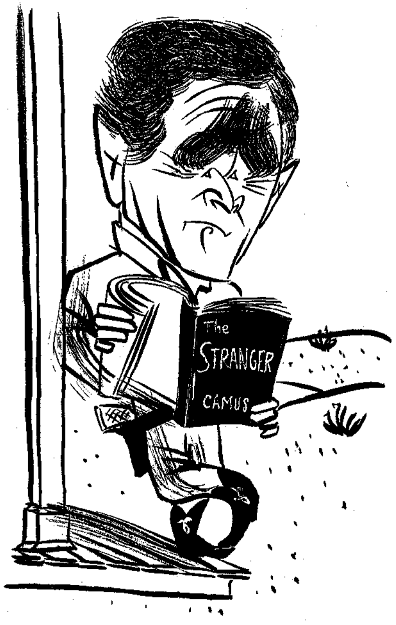
THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
READ IT AND WEEP

Summer reading lists are meant both for self-improvement and to impress an audience. That boy reading Proust on the beach has an eye for the girl nearby turning the pages of Virginia Woolf as much as he does for his own vow to get to the end of the damn thing at last. Presidential summer reading lists are no different, meant as much to titillate a particular public as to inventory a private disposition. When the President announces that he is reading, say, a new three-volume history of the Louisiana Purchase, he may actually be reading it, but he is also signalling to the commentariat watching from the next dune that it's time for them to go into their "surprisingly thoughtful statesman" bit.

Nonetheless, it is hard not to brood, in old-fashioned Kremlinological style, on the meanings of George W. Bush's syllabus for this particular summer. Where in summers past he has read fiction by Tom Wolfe, or a comprehensive history of salt—both very good things in the right seasonal doses—this summer, perhaps under the pressure of events, he has embarked on a more strenuous list. An amazingly strenuous list, actually. It includes Albert Camus's novel "The Stranger"; Kai Bird and Martin Sherwin's book about Robert Oppenheimer and the invention of the atomic bomb; and Richard Carwardine's new biography of Abraham Lincoln.

Already, it seems, the President has polished off the Camus and had a debate with his new press secretary, Tony Snow, on the origins of existentialism. Now, it's possible to feel misgivings about the President's ranch reading. Hasn't there been, over the years, more useful material for him to scrutinize—memos, for instance, about Osama bin Laden's intention to strike in the United States, or State Department studies on the difference between Sunnis and Shiites in a country he was about to invade? But it is the sunny optimism of humanism to imagine that books change lives, and that no one can come away from "The Stranger" entirely unaffected, particularly one who is, as he reminds us, a wartime President.



The book, after all, takes up the mysterious origins and horrific consequences of irrational acts of violence committed in the Arab world. Meursault, a French kid in Algeria caught up in a funk of alienation, shoots dead a stranger on the beach—a "native," at that—for reasons he cannot explain even to himself. (He has had minor confrontations with Arabs, but Camus makes it plain that it hardly accounts for this act.) Camus's purpose is to dramatize the psychology of pathological violence as a self-defining act, and his point, though open to debate with Tony Snow, is that violence may arise not as a result of premeditation and ideological fixation but as a sporadic and unplanned impulse, a kind of perpetual human temptation. To look too narrowly for rational purpose in it is to mistake its very nature. The freedom to act includes the freedom to do evil, and the murderer within us is no further away than a walk on the beach in a bad mood. People kill because they vaguely imagine, in a moral haze like the one overhanging the sun-scorched sand, that on the other side of murder lies some kind of expiation, or the thrill of rising above the mundane, or a way of pushing past alienation, or a shortcut to significance. People kill because they can.

How closely this truth touches the heart of this summer's various horrors, or

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

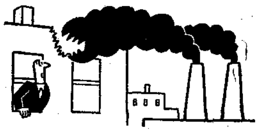
near-horrors. The bright young British Muslims, with their innocent-looking sports drinks, seem to have decided on mass murder not because they had exhausted all other possibilities but because, Meursault-like, in the madness of young men, it seemed thrilling and self-defining and glorifying—just as (the President might further reflect) the zeal of the neocon pamphleteers of summers past seems now to have come less from any strategic certainties than from the urge to some kind of muscular self-assertion, as wishfully defined as it was impossible to achieve.

Camus, the President should be reminded, did not come by this wisdom cheaply or at a distance; he came by it from the center of modern history. As "Camus at *Combat*," a new collection of his editorials—he was a working journalist—makes plain, the experience, first, of the Nazi occupation of France, and then of the struggle of Algerian independence against France led him to conclude that the "primitive" impulse to kill and torture shared a taproot with the habit of abstraction, of thinking of other people as a class of entities. Camus was no pacifist, but he deplored the logic of thinking in categories. "We have witnessed lying, humiliation, killing, deportation and torture, and in each instance it was impossible to persuade the people who were doing these things not to do them, because they were sure of themselves and because there is no way of persuading an abstraction, or, to put it another way, the representative of an ideology," he wrote. Terror makes fear, and fear stops thinking. The way out of Meursaultism is to think about particular people, proximate causes, and obtainable objectives—not an easy thing to do in any circumstance and nearly impossible in the face of those ideologies, left and right, for which, Camus writes, "fear is a method."

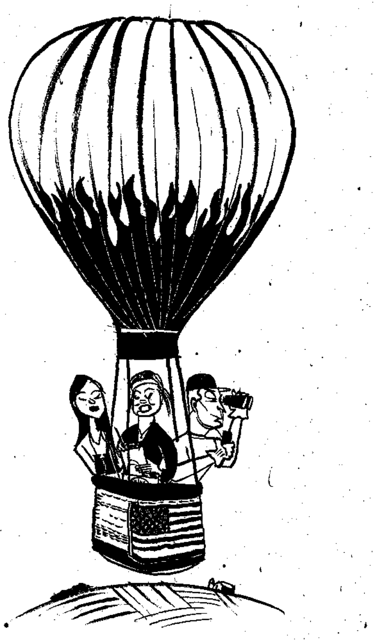
And all this brings us no further than book one on the President's stack, with Oppenheimer and Lincoln still to be chewed on. Bush may have emerged from his syllabus as little altered as most undergraduates emerge from theirs. Still, it is encouraging to think that he has spent the summer reflecting on the inscrutable origins of human violence and on the unimaginable destructive powers now available through American science, while contemplating the achievements of a great man who hated wars, made a necessary one, and wandered the halls of the White House agonized by the consequences. It sounds almost like the beginnings of wisdom, or, at least, a compulsory fall reading list for us all.

—*Adam Gopnik*

FIELD STUDIES
UP AND AWAY



Beate Liepert is an atmospheric physicist at Columbia University. She has trouble telling left from right—a result, she thinks, of being forced, as a young girl in Bavaria, to write with her right hand. Now she's ambidextrous, and can read backward, although she used to have a problem with certain word pairs: she'd call sugar salt or a table a chair, and would insist, after being corrected, that she'd been misheard.



Liepert mentioned all this near the end of a drive the other day from upper Manhattan to an airfield in western New Jersey, where she was to embark on a flight in a hot-air balloon. A passenger's initial unease over the balloon flight—"We go up to six thousand feet," Liepert had said, "and we have no safety equipment"—had been displaced by that of riding in a rickety convertible driven by an absent-minded academic. Crawling along in the fast lane on I-78, Liepert tried, in a sturdy German accent, to explain her research.

"We try to see how much air pollution is locally emitted and how much goes around the world," she said. To that end, she (and her colleague Steven Chillrud, who was both afraid of heights and on vacation) had been measuring particles and light transparency in the air column over New York City in recent months. Liepert had been analyzing climate satellite data for NASA, but she wanted to gather more nuanced information. "Within a balloon, you are part of the air," she said. This was her eighth and final flight.

Liepert was one of the early proponents of the idea that air pollution blots out the sun—that the emissions that cause global warming can also mask its effects. This politically charged observation has led some to suggest that we should pollute the air on purpose. Liepert, for her part, is squarely in favor of producing fewer particles, not more. At any rate, she was particularly interested in the boundary layer between the low-lying Northeast Corridor pollution—the gray haze over New York and Philadelphia—and the globe-trotting stuff way up there, which can be less visible but more insidious. On an earlier flight, she had detected particles from a forest fire in Alaska.

The first balloon aeronauts, in 1783, were a sheep, a duck, and a rooster. For this particle-measuring flight, a sunset cruise, the load consisted of Liepert, an assistant, a guest, and the pilot, Marty Pfenninger, the owner of a paving business, who has been flying balloons for twelve years. "Every flight is different," Pfenninger said. "You never land in the same place twice." (You can't really steer.)

At one end of the runway, a crew used a giant fan to inflate the balloon, which was yellow and patterned with red flames. The basket was made of wicker and was about the size of a booth at a diner. As Pfenninger fired up the burners, the basket went upright and started to buck. Liepert loaded up the particle counters—two metal boxes with plastic tubing attached—and climbed in.

The basket rose above the treetops. Pfenninger sat on the basket's edge; he was not wearing epaulets or a commodore's hat, but there was something august about him as he worked the burners and the balloon shot up, its shadow shrinking in the fields. It was headed south at twenty miles per hour. The barking of dogs fell away, the Delaware River came into view (from the Water Gap down to Trenton), and in the splendid silence Liepert began reading out numbers: altitude, wind speed, temperature, humidity, particles per litre of air. Pfenninger radioed driving directions to the chase van: "Take 519 into Baptistown, toward Rosemont."

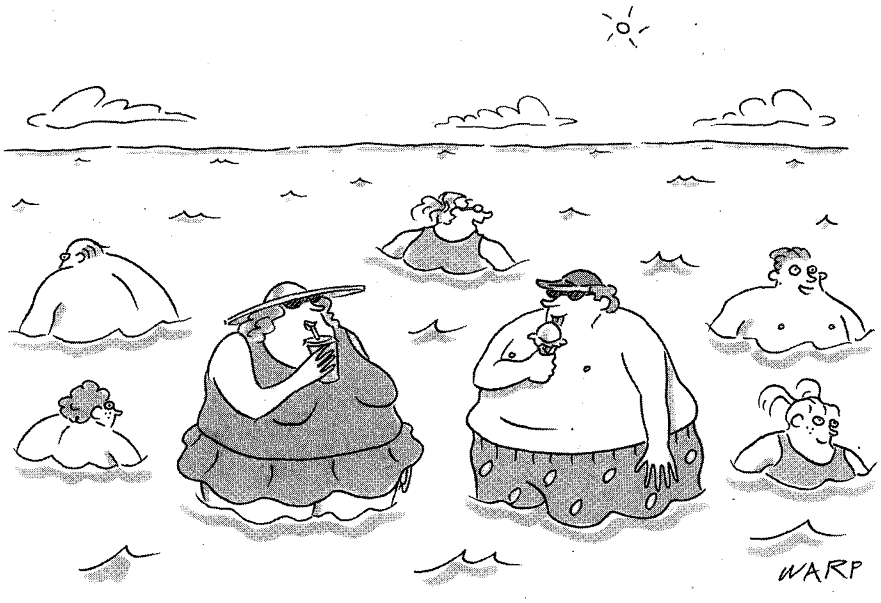
It was a gorgeous, seemingly low-particle evening. You could clearly see both Manhattan and Philadelphia, and miles of farmland, forest, and sprawl. But at five thousand feet Liepert said, "We are so high, yet we still have so many particles. Do you see? It's kind of fuzzy."

"Let's try to get to six thousand," Pfenninger said. He topped out at six thousand six hundred and fifty feet—Liepert's highest flight ever.

"There are a thousand times fewer particles!" Liepert said.

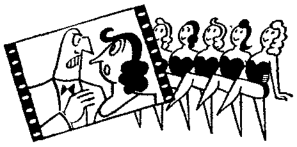
The first hot-air balloon, in 1783, landed in a pasture, and peasants attacked it with pitchforks. Pfenninger gradually descended, sailing low over a gulch—deer fleeing, kids waving—while eying various fields and back yards. The chase van had lost track of him. He brushed the treetops and brought her down, the basket bumping along the grass—"Hold on!"—before coming to an agitated state of rest. There was a house. Pfenninger ordered the guest out. "Go get the address, will you?"

—*Nick Paumgarten*



Rising Sea Levels — An Alternative Theory

COMEBACK DEPT.
GIGI IN JERSEY



The actress Leslie Caron, whom Gene Kelly plucked, in 1948, when she was seventeen, from the Ballets des Champs-Elysées and then shipped to Hollywood, where she pirouetted and pouted her way through several M-G-M classics, has grown accustomed, in recent years, to the silence of her telephone. "I was absolutely convinced that I couldn't act anymore," she said not long ago. "I thought, I'm this old Gigi and Lili, and I suppose I can't pretend anymore. Nobody's going to hire me."

But, recently, the call came, summoning her from her Paris home—not to Hollywood but to North Bergen, New Jersey, where the TV crime drama "Law & Order: Special Victims Unit" is filmed. A tiny woman with high cheekbones, Caron was on the set the other day, sitting for the show's hair stylist. She conveyed dignity and a slight hauteur, even in a T-shirt that read "Boston" in bright bubble letters. Over the loud hum of a hair dryer, she recalled receiving urgent messages from her agent between trips to Burgundy, where she runs an inn, and Sardinia, where she is building a cottage.

"I arrived in Sardinia," she said, "in that place which is nothing but rocks—where forty years ago people didn't know what it was to sleep on a bed, where they didn't know what an electric iron was! Now they're so up-to-date. The script came e-mailed to my—what do you call it—my surveyor. Seventy pages spewed out, in that forsaken place!"

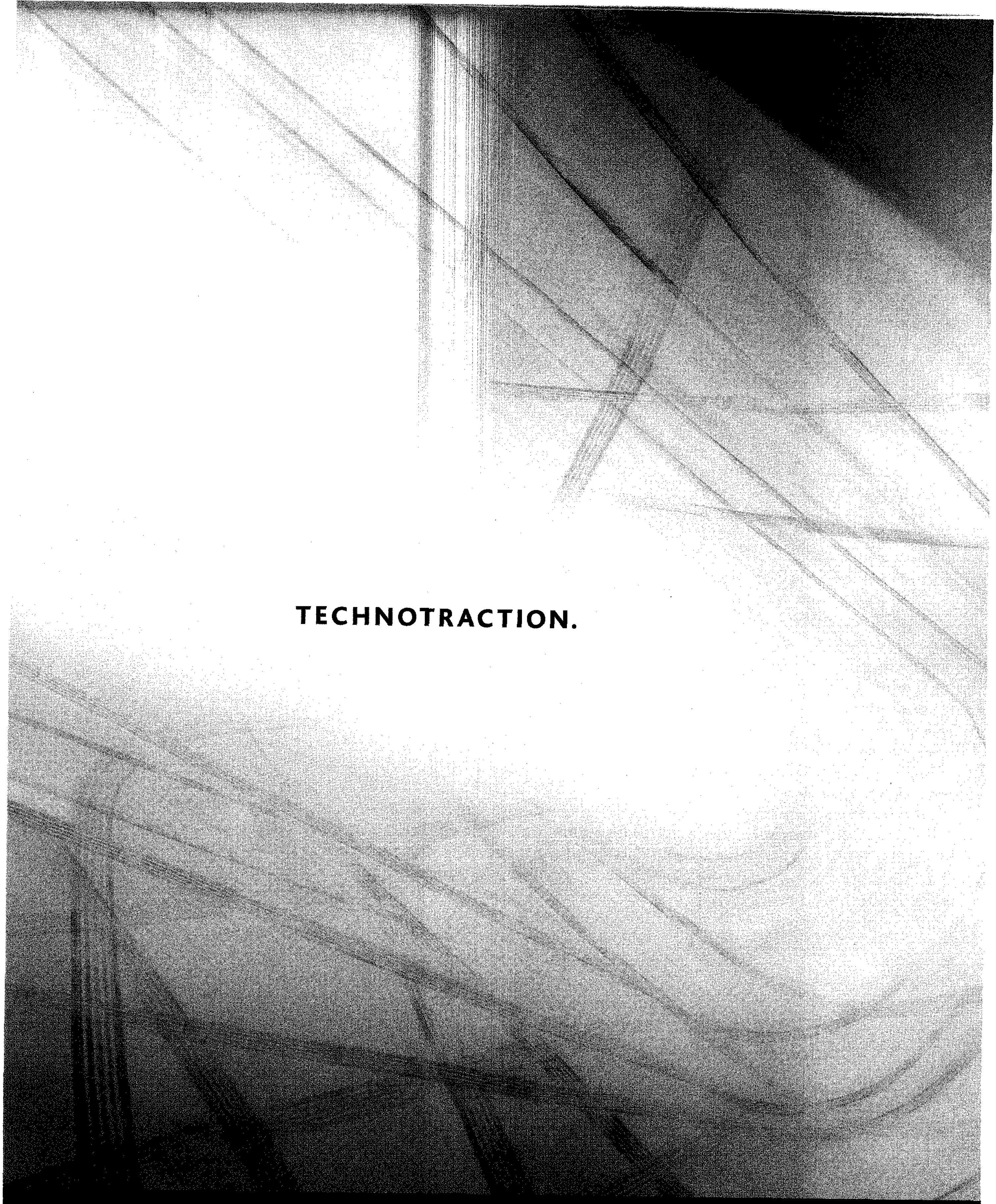
Caron knows "Law & Order," because it also airs in France. "I watch the other one, with Sam Waterston"—a friend from the 2003 Merchant-Ivory film "Le Divorce." She went on, "And I adore anything that has to do with police and murders, or detective series. I find them so reassuring, because the baddie always gets caught!" The hairdresser was now spraying Caron's chignon into place. "Oh, you've made me very neat," Caron said with a sigh.

In the episode in which Caron appears, which will air in October, she plays a French émigrée whom the S.V.U. detectives persuade to testify against the man who raped her forty years earlier. Two of the show's executive producers, Neal Baer and Ted Kotcheff, had secured Caron a visa in a mere two weeks. ("We called senators' offices!" Baer said.) But to most of the crew Caron's presence didn't exactly constitute a celebrity sighting. "Now, T-Bone," Juan Campanella, the episode's director, said to a skinny P.A., "this weekend you're renting 'An American in Paris,' so you can see what this lady can do."

Those who did recognize Caron treated her with exaggerated deference. "She looks great, doesn't she?" Kotcheff, who is himself seventy-five, said. "I fell madly in love with her when she was in 'Gigi.' " He crooned, "The song of love is a sad song, Hi-Lili, Hi-Lili, Hi-Lo."

"That's 'Lili,' " Campanella said. " 'Gigi' is 'Thank heaven for little girls.' "

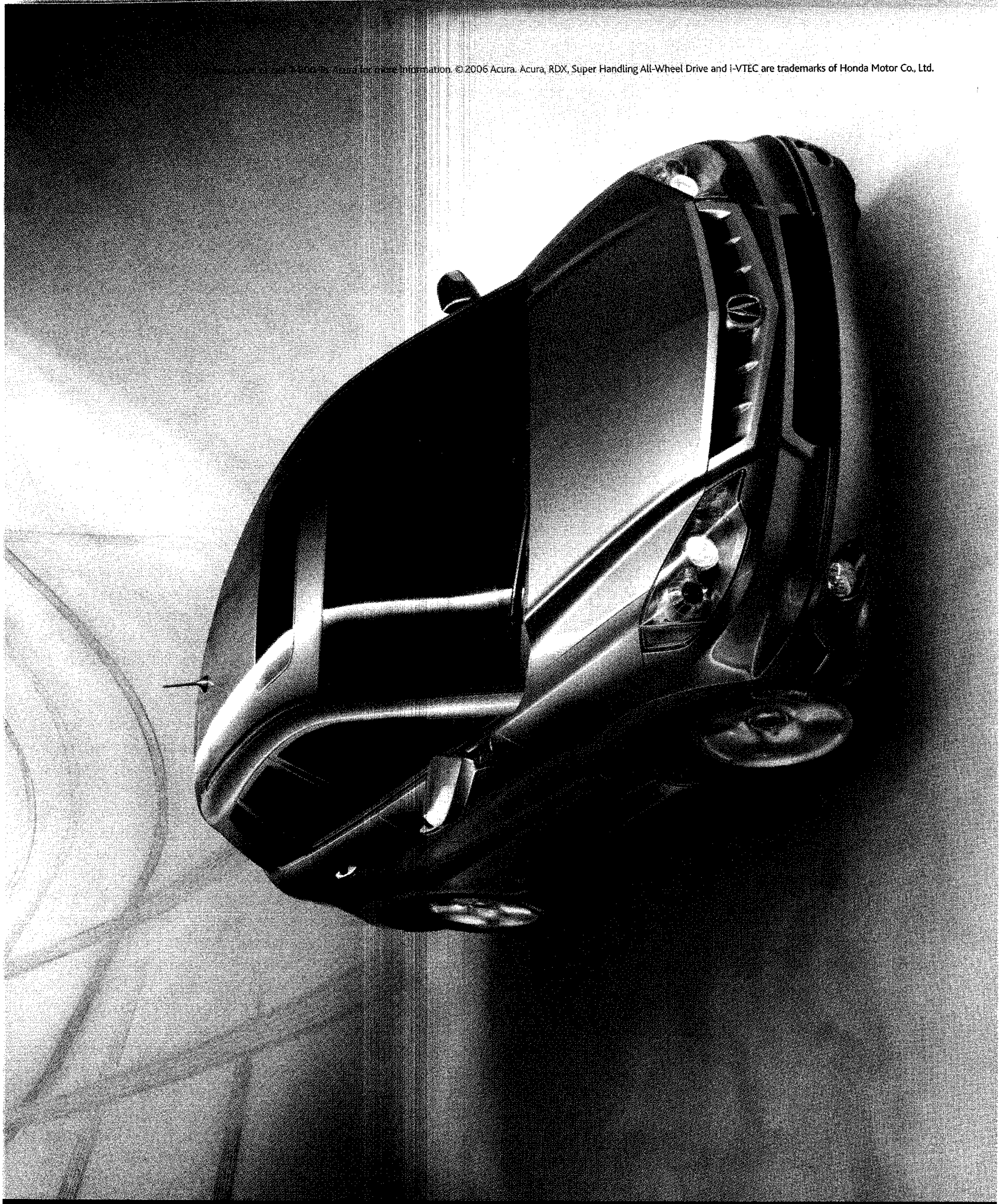
"Ha! You couldn't sing that song



The all-new Acura RDX.

TECHNOCHARGED

Consider the envelope pushed. The limits redrawn. And everything you thought you knew about an SUV turned upside down. Introducing the Acura RDX. With its road-gripping [illegible] 1-800-To-Acura for more information. © 2006 Acura. Acura, RDX, Super Handling All-Wheel Drive and i-VTEC are trademarks of Honda Motor Co., Ltd.



Super Handling All-Wheel Drive™ system, a 240-hp i-VTEC® turbo engine and virtually every other comfort known to man, the RDX isn't just on the cutting edge. It is the cutting edge.

ACURA

these days," Kotcheff said. "They'd arrest you immediately!"

In between scenes, Caron came over to where Campanella was sitting and thanked him for his guidance. "I used to get so upset with Jim Ivory," she said. "He's so respectful of actors that he doesn't give you any direction! He says, 'How do you want to play this, dahling?' And you think, Christ, he doesn't know what he's doing!" Kotcheff and Campanella laughed. "I really prefer," she concluded, "for the director to do very *pointilliste* work with me."

Campanella launched into a monologue about the era of the great musicals. "What is it like to make films like that?" he said. "I mean, do you realize that you're making history?"

"No, you're thinking of your feet that are hurting!" Caron said, laughing.

"But what was Gene Kelly thinking when he swung around that lamppost in 'Singin' in the Rain'? Did he know that that moment would be so—"

"I remember when Betty Comden and Adolph Green were trying to write the movie," Caron said. "We were friends, and we would all go to Gene Kelly's house on Saturday nights and Sunday afternoons. And they said, 'Oh, we're sweating, we're so hot. How will we finish this script?' And they complained about 'that goddam song'!"

Caron returned to the set to do a scene with Connie Nielsen. The writers had decided that Nielsen should interview Caron's character in French. The lines were written in English; the women translated them on the spot. When the scene was over, Campanella sat back in his chair, visibly moved, and said, "I didn't understand a word, but she was wonderful."

—*Kate Taylor*

MOVING PICTURES

TEAR, SLAP, CLACK

Shortly before sunrise on a summer Tuesday, a truck left a warehouse in Rockville, Maryland. It travelled a mile to a post office. The driver backed up to a loading dock, where fifteen mail carts awaited him. The carts were stacked with boxes of those ubiquitous red pre-paid envelopes, containing DVDs addressed to Netflix. Before 1998, the only option for renting videos was a local store with a few thousand titles. Today, Netflix, as a delivery system, is almost as ingrained as the mail itself. Five million subscribers select movies online, watch them at home, send them back, and pay monthly fees: $17.99 a month for the most popular plan (three at a time, at home or in transit).

By the time the truck is back at the warehouse—one of forty-one similar hubs around the country—and has been unloaded, some forty employees ("associates," in Netflix parlance) are ready for work. The majority are women who were born in Africa and in Asia. At 6:30 A.M., they sit down in ergonomic chairs and begin the process known as "rental return." An associate tears open an envelope that contains a sleeve enclosing a disk, tosses the empty envelope into a recycling bin, removes the DVD from its sleeve, checks the title on the DVD (when "Black Dog" arrives in a sleeve for "The Triangle," the mismatched sleeve is discarded and "Black Dog" is resleeved), checks the condition of the sleeve (those with coffee stains or other evidence of having been used as coasters will also be replaced), checks the condition of the DVD (for scratches and cracks), and extracts customer notes ("THROW THIS DAMN DISK AWAY. IT DOES NOT WORK AFTER EPISODE 2, CHAPTER 4!"). Fingers flying and heads swivelling, the women each open between four hundred and fifty and eleven hundred and fifty returned rentals an hour.

Tuesday is the busiest day of the week at Netflix—people tend to watch DVDs on the weekend and mail them back on Mondays—but by 11 A.M. the day's incoming envelopes have been processed and the associates have an hour for lunch. Netflix hires associates from temp agencies, starting at nine dollars an hour. Those who can maintain a fast and accurate pace become permanent employees after three months. Benefits include a free DVD player and a Netflix subscription. "If I see a title often, I'll take a chance on it," a slender woman from Hong Kong said. She enjoyed the first two seasons of "Entourage" this way.

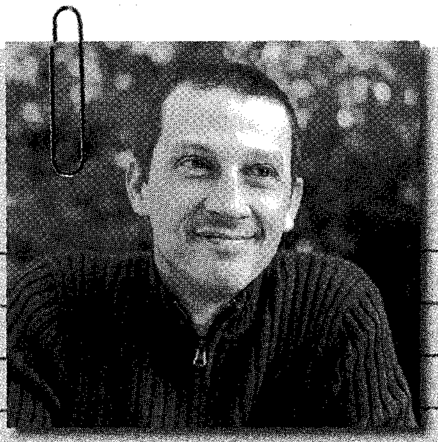
At noon, the "stuffing" process gets under way. An associate grabs a sleeved outbound disk with one hand; inserts it into an electronically addressed envelope with the other; flips the envelope closed; rips off a peel over a sticker strip; and presses the envelope shut. Stuffing styles vary. One associate's hands move so quickly that she seems to be a fan operating at highest speed. She is among the fastest workers, with a stuffing rate of about a thousand per hour. In fifty-seven seconds, she stuffed "Oyster Farmer," "Elizabethtown," "Where the Buffalo Roam," two copies of "Brokeback Mountain," "Hill Street Blues: Season 2: Disc 6," "Picture Perfect," "The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants," two copies of "Firewall," "The Ice Harvest," "Elfen Lied: Volume 1: Vector One," "Best Motoring: Rotary Reborn," two copies of "16 Blocks," "Rumor Has It," "24: Season 3: Disc 2," and "Sky Captain and the World of Tomorrow." Reed Hastings, the C.E.O. of Netflix, would not be hired as an associate. His stuffing rate is three hundred and sixty per hour.

Stuffed Netflix envelopes are sealed on two sides and fed into a tabber, a machine that slaps tabs on a third side at the rate of six thousand an hour. The next step for the envelopes is one of the hub's four Zip Code sorters. The envelopes zoom down vertical conveyor belts and exit at their Zip Code destinations along the belt with loud clacks.

Associates work forty hours a week. By 5:30 P.M., most had completed their work. Tabbers still slapped and envelopes still clacked into destination slots for two more hours. After the warehouse closes, a truck returns to the post office, which accepts first-class pre-sorted mail for next-day delivery until 8 P.M. A hundred and twenty-six thousand DVDs came out of the post office in the morning, a hundred and twenty-six thousand went back that evening. Netflix is one of the ten largest users of first-class mail in America.

Sometime on Wednesday, a Netflix subscriber in Washington, D.C., or St. Michaels, Maryland, or Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, would be able to cut the tab on a red envelope, open it along one edge, and extract "Y Tu Mamá También" (five and a half per cent of rentals are foreign films), or "Martha's Baking Favorites" (how-to videos are just shy of two per cent of the Netflix catalogue), or "Syriana" (that week's most rented title).

—*Susan Sheehan*



Dear Genentech,

There are three things that no one wants to hear: you have cancer, it's malignant, and it's fatal. I heard all three. Immediately, my thoughts were not of my life, but of my wife and four young kids. Thankfully, my doctor put me on a Genentech therapy and my cancer went into remission. I cannot express my gratitude enough. To honor my new lease on life I competed in a triathlon. That's right, a triathlon. And not too long ago I was just hoping to live. Thank you, Genentech. You saved my life.

Sincerely,

Michael Picarella
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Letter reprinted with permission.

Genentech is a biotechnology company dedicated to finding cures for cancer and other serious diseases.
For more information, visit us at www.gene.com.

Genentech
IN BUSINESS FOR LIFE

THE FINANCIAL PAGE
PRIVATE LIES

In the late nineteen-nineties, every bright young entrepreneur with a startup was dying to take his company public. In a time of generous stock options and irrationally optimistic markets, I.P.O.s seemed to offer a reliable road to riches. But lately the opposite approach—taking a company private—has become popular. Since the beginning of 2005, nearly a hundred top-level executives at public companies have participated in management buyouts, or M.B.O.s, joining private-equity investors to buy their companies from shareholders. In just the past month, a team led by the C.E.O. of the food-service provider Aramark undertook to buy the company at a cost of $8.3 billion, while at H.C.A.—the hospital chain founded by the father and brother of Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist—private equity firms and the Frist family announced a deal to buy that company, for $31.6 billion.

The executives behind these buyouts say that they're the best solution for everyone involved. Investors get a nice bump in the price of their shares—H.C.A. shareholders, for instance, are getting twenty per cent more than the market price—and executives are freed from the demands of cautious investors and zealous regulators. The company as a whole benefits because management can stop worrying about Wall Street's short-term expectations and concentrate, in the words of Aramark's C.E.O., on "building long-term solutions that deliver the most value for our clients and customers."

What the executives in these deals don't say is that such buyouts create huge conflicts of interest. The C.E.O. of a public company is legally obligated to look after shareholders' interests, which in the case of selling the company means getting the highest price possible. But when that same C.E.O. is trying to buy the company, he wants to pay the lowest price possible. Companies try to get around this by having independent members of the board of directors negotiate the deal. In practice, however, directors have generally been appointed by the company's C.E.O. and have spent a good deal of time working with him; they're hardly likely to drive a hard bargain. When the consortium led by Aramark's C.E.O. first bid for the company, for instance, it offered thirty-two dollars a share. After shareholders complained, it upped the bid by $1.80, which the directors accepted. Now, that's some real haggling. A study of buyouts over the past two years suggests that when management is the buyer it pays, on average, thirty per cent less than an outside bidder.

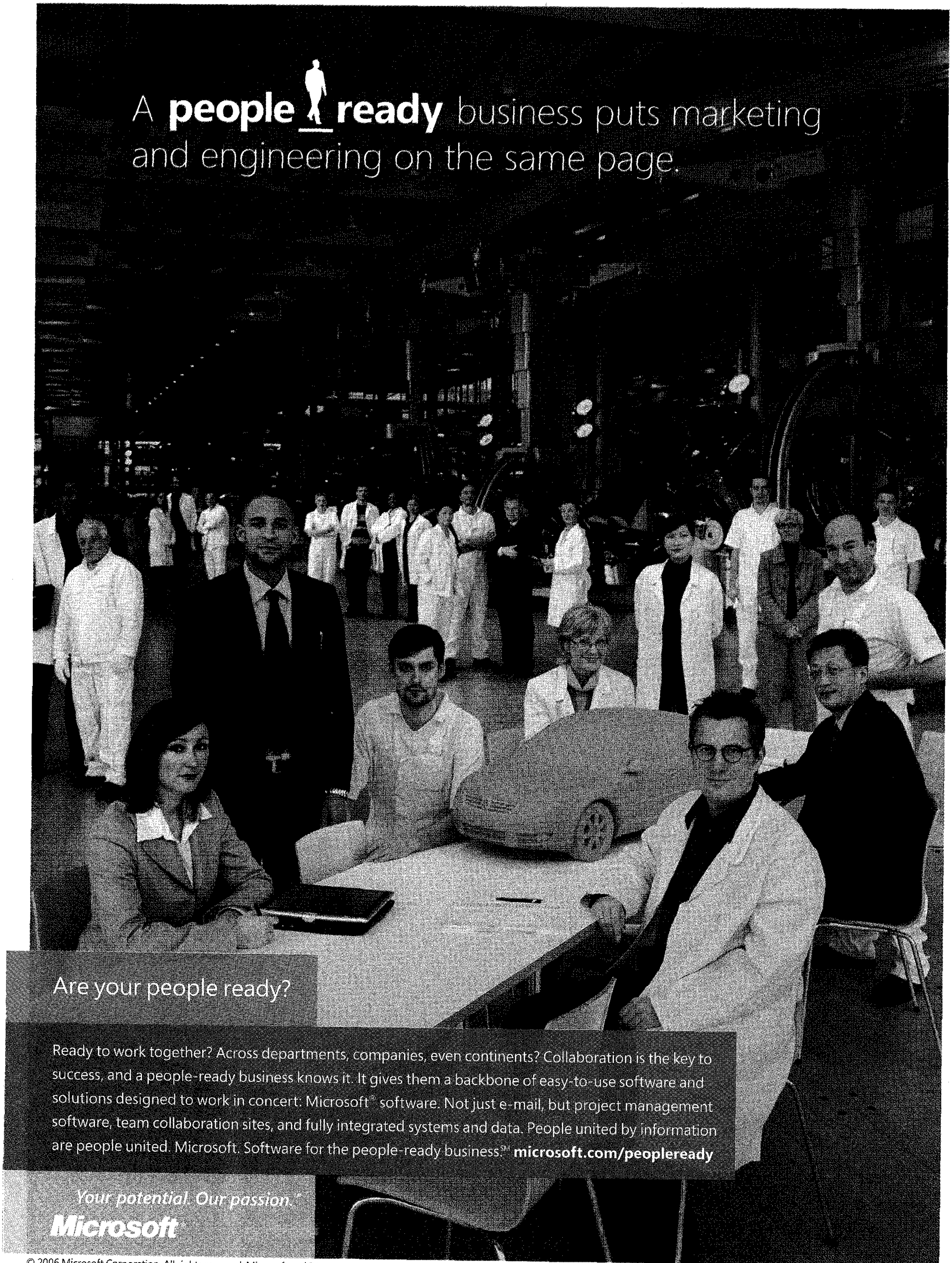
Even more troubling, management buyouts give executives at public companies an incentive not to maximize the value of their companies before the sale. In 1987, for instance, after the textile giant Burlington Industries was taken private by a buyout group that included top Burlington executives, it quickly sold off the company's "nonproductive assets," including ten separate divisions and a host of manufacturing plants, for well over half a billion dollars. The executives could have done those deals while Burlington was a public company. But doing them after the buyout, when they owned more of the firm, meant that they reaped more of the benefits. Similarly, management buyouts are often associated with major restructurings to make companies leaner and more profitable. With few exceptions, these restructurings could be done before buyouts. But they're not, in part because executives would rather wait until they own a bigger chunk of the company. A study of buyouts in the U.K., for instance, found that C.E.O.s who planned to buy their own companies were less likely to embark on restructuring than C.E.O.s who weren't.

Also, executives, before making a buyout offer, use accounting gimmicks to make their company's performance look worse than it really is. In a study of more than sixty companies that went private, Sharon Katz, of the Harvard Business School, found that, in the two years preceding a management buyout, companies recorded lower than expected accounts receivable, which drove profits down. Similarly, a study by two accounting professors found that executives pursuing M.B.O.s tended to accelerate the recognition of expenses and delay the recognition of revenue, making their companies look less profitable than they were. Management buyouts have a reputation for dramatically improving companies' performance. But these studies suggest that part of the reason is that executives were making them look bad while they were public.

There are certainly valid reasons for taking a company private, and it's also possible that C.E.O.s perform better when monitored by a small number of owners in a private company rather than by the dispersed and often uninterested shareholders of a public corporation. But if management buyouts were really about the virtues of private ownership you'd expect companies that go private to stay private. The reality, though, is that, with high-profile deals, this rarely happens. Instead, after a company has been buffed and shined, it's generally taken public again. Both H.C.A. and Aramark, in fact, have gone from public to private to public, and now are going private again. This suggests that management buyouts are often simply an opportunity for insiders to pick up assets on the cheap and flip them a few years later for fantastic sums. Over the past fifteen years, public companies have come up with ever more lavish performance-related pay packages, in the hope of giving C.E.O.s enough incentive to do their jobs and look after shareholders' interests. But why expect someone to be happy with tens of millions for putting shareholders first when he can get hundreds of millions for putting them last?

—James Surowiecki

CHRISTOPH NIEMANN



A **people ready** business puts marketing and engineering on the same page.

Are your people ready?

Ready to work together? Across departments, companies, even continents? Collaboration is the key to success, and a people-ready business knows it. It gives them a backbone of easy-to-use software and solutions designed to work in concert: Microsoft® software. Not just e-mail, but project management software, team collaboration sites, and fully integrated systems and data. People united by information are people united. Microsoft. Software for the people-ready business.℠ **microsoft.com/peopleready**

Your potential. Our passion.®

Microsoft®

© 2006 Microsoft Corporation. All rights reserved. Microsoft and "Your potential. Our passion." are either registered trademarks or trademarks of Microsoft Corporation in the United States and/or other countries.

DEPT. OF HUMAN RESOURCES

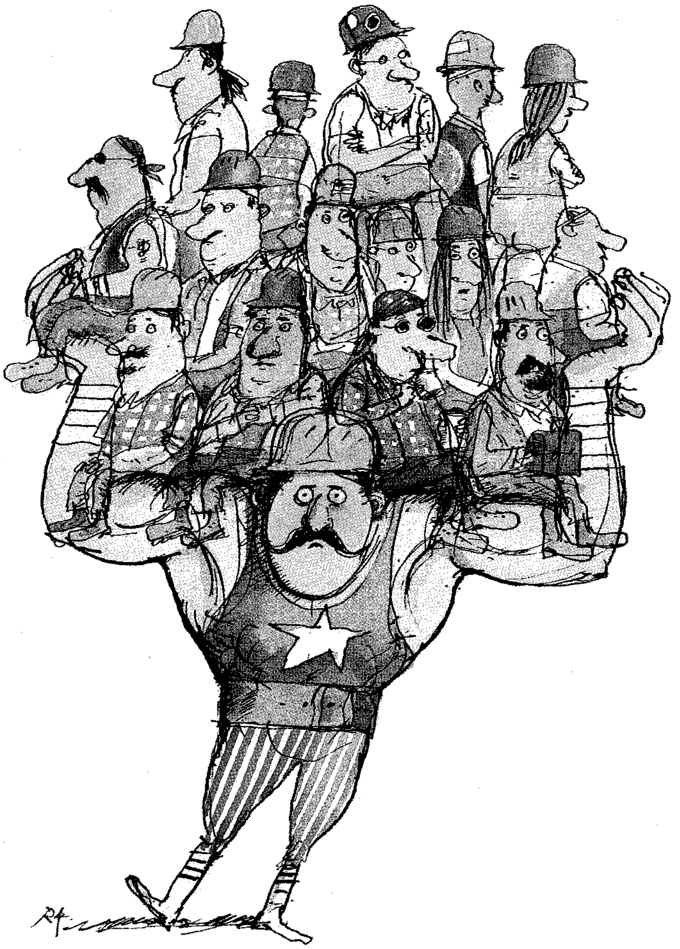
THE RISK POOL

What's behind Ireland's economic miracle—and G.M.'s financial crisis?

BY MALCOLM GLADWELL

The years just after the Second World War were a time of great industrial upheaval in the United States. Strikes were commonplace. Workers moved from one company to another. Runaway inflation was eroding the value of wages. In the uncertain nineteen-forties, in the wake of the Depression and the war, workers wanted security, and in 1949 the head of the Toledo, Ohio, local of the United Auto Workers, Richard Gosser, came up with a proposal. The workers of Toledo needed pensions. But, he said, the pension plan should be regional, spread across the many small auto-parts makers, electrical-appliance manufacturers, and plastics shops in the Toledo area. That way, if workers switched jobs they could take their pension credits with them, and if a company went bankrupt its workers' retirement would be safe. Every company in the area, Gosser proposed, should pay ten cents an hour, per worker, into a centralized fund.

The business owners of Toledo reacted immediately. "They were terrified," says Jennifer Klein, a labor historian at Yale University, who has written about the Toledo case. "They organized a trade association to stop the plan. In the business press, they actually said, 'This idea might be efficient and rational. But it's too dangerous.' Some of the larger employers stepped forward and said, 'We'll offer you a company pension. Forget about that whole other idea.' They took on the costs of setting up an individual company pension, at great expense, in order to head off what they saw as too much organized power for workers in the region."



Companies stagger when pensioners outnumber workers.

A year later, the same issue came up in Detroit. The president of General Motors at the time was Charles E. Wilson, known as Engine Charlie. Wilson was one of the highest-paid corporate executives in America, earning $586,100 (and paying, incidentally, $430,350 in taxes). He was in contract talks with Walter Reuther, the national president of the U.A.W. The two men had already agreed on a cost-of-living allowance. Now Wilson went one step further, and, for the first time, offered every G.M. employee health-care benefits and a pension.

Reuther had his doubts. He lived in a northwest Detroit bungalow, and drove a 1940 Chevrolet. His salary was ten thousand dollars a year. He was the son of a Debsian Socialist, worked for the Socialist Party during his college days, and went to the Soviet Union in the nineteen-thirties to teach peasants how to be auto machinists. His inclination was to fight for changes that benefitted every worker, not just those lucky enough to be employed by General Motors. In the nineteen-thirties, unions had launched a number of health-care plans, many of which cut across individual company and industry lines. In the nineteen-forties, they argued for expanding Social Security. In 1945, when President Truman first proposed national health insurance, they cheered. In 1947, when Ford offered its workers a pension, the union voted it down. The labor movement believed that the safest and most efficient way to provide insurance against ill health or old age was to spread the costs and risks of benefits over the biggest and most diverse group possible. Walter Reuther, as Nelson Lichtenstein argues in his definitive biography, believed that risk ought to be broadly collectivized. Charlie Wilson, on the other hand, felt the way the business leaders of Toledo did: that collectivization was a threat to the free market and to the autonomy of business owners. In his view, companies themselves ought to assume the risks of providing insurance.

America's private pension system is now in crisis. Over the past few years, American taxpayers have been put at risk of assuming tens of billions of dollars of pension liabilities from once profitable companies. Hundreds of thousands of retired steelworkers and airline employees have seen health-care benefits that were promised to them by their employers vanish. General Motors, the country's largest automaker, is between forty and fifty billion dollars behind in the money it needs to fulfill its health-care and pension promises. This crisis is sometimes portrayed as the result of corporate America's excessive generosity in making promises to its workers. But when it comes to retirement, health, disability, and unemployment benefits there is nothing exceptional about the United States: it is average among industrialized countries—more generous than Australia, Canada, Ireland, and Italy, just behind Finland and the United Kingdom, and on a par with the Netherlands and Denmark. The difference is that in most countries the government, or large groups of companies, provides pensions and health insurance. The United States, by contrast, has over the past fifty years followed the lead of Charlie Wilson and the bosses of Toledo and made individual companies responsible for the care of their retirees. It is this fact, as much as any other, that explains the current crisis. In 1950, Charlie Wilson was wrong, and Walter Reuther was right.

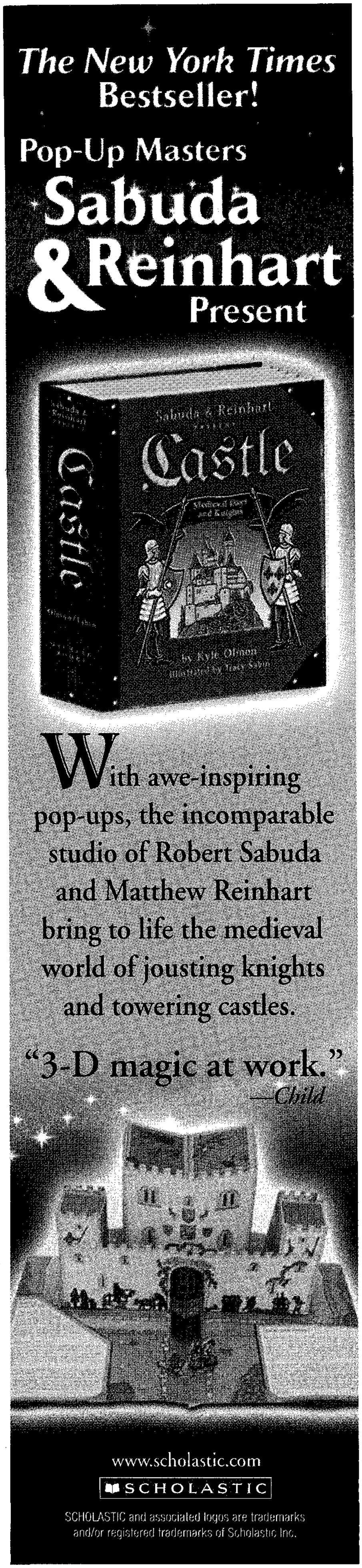
The key to understanding the pension business is something called the "dependency ratio," and dependency ratios are best understood in the context of countries. In the past two decades, for instance, Ireland has gone from being one of the most economically backward countries in Western Europe to being one of the strongest: its growth rate has been roughly double that of the rest of Europe. There is no shortage of conventional explanations. Ireland joined the European Union. It opened up its markets. It invested well in education and economic infrastructure. It's a politically stable country with a sophisticated, mobile workforce.

But, as the Harvard economists David Bloom and David Canning suggest in their study of the "Celtic Tiger," of greater importance may have been a singular demographic fact. In 1979, restrictions on contraception that had been in place since Ireland's founding were lifted, and the birth rate began to fall. In 1970, the average Irishwoman had 3.9 children. By the mid-nineteen-nineties, that number was less than two. As a result, when the Irish children born in the nineteen-sixties hit the workforce, there weren't a lot of children in the generation just behind them. Ireland was suddenly free of the enormous social cost of supporting and educating and caring for a large dependent population. It was like a family of four in which, all of a sudden, the elder child is old enough to take care of her little brother and the mother can rejoin the workforce. Overnight, that family doubles its number of breadwinners and becomes much better off.

This relation between the number of people who aren't of working age and the number of people who are is captured in the dependency ratio. In Ireland during the sixties, when contraception was illegal, there were ten people who were too old or too young to work for every fourteen people in a position to earn a paycheck. That meant that the country was spending a large percentage of its resources on caring for the young and the old. Last year, Ireland's dependency ratio hit an all-time low: for every ten dependents, it had twenty-two people of working age. That change coincides precisely with the country's extraordinary economic surge.

Demographers estimate that declines in dependency ratios are responsible for about a third of the East Asian economic miracle of the postwar era; this is a part of the world that, in the course of twenty-five years, saw its dependency ratio decline thirty-five per cent. Dependency ratios may also help answer the much-debated question of whether India or China has a brighter economic future. Right now, China is in the midst of what Joseph Chamie, the former director of the United Nations' population division, calls the "sweet spot." In the nineteen-sixties, China brought down its birth rate dramatically; those children are now grown up and in the workforce, and there is no similarly sized class of dependents behind them. India, on the other hand, reduced its birth rate much more slowly and has yet to hit the sweet spot. Its best years are ahead.

The logic of dependency ratios, of course, works equally powerfully in reverse. If your economy benefits by having a big bulge of working-age people, then your economy will have a harder time of it when that bulge generation retires, and there are relatively few workers to take their place. For China, the next few decades will be more difficult. "China will peak with a 1-to-2.6 dependency ratio between 2010 and 2015,"



The New York Times **Bestseller!**

Pop-Up Masters Sabuda & Reinhart Present

Sabuda & Reinhart Present
Castle
Medieval Days and Knights
by Kyle Olmon
Illustrated by Tracy Sabin

With awe-inspiring pop-ups, the incomparable studio of Robert Sabuda and Matthew Reinhart bring to life the medieval world of jousting knights and towering castles.

"3-D magic at work."
—*Child*

www.scholastic.com

SCHOLASTIC

SCHOLASTIC and associated logos are trademarks and/or registered trademarks of Scholastic Inc.

Bloom says. "But then it's back to a little over 1-to-1.5 by 2050. That's a pretty dramatic change. Thirty per cent of the Chinese population will be over sixty by 2050. That's four hundred and thirty-two million people." Demographers sometimes say that China is in a race to get rich before it gets old.

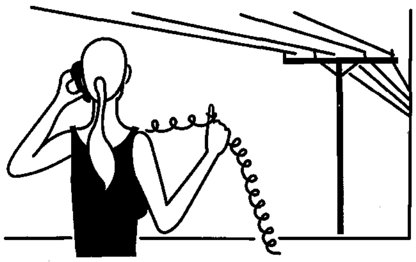
Economists have long paid attention to population growth, making the argument that the number of people in a country is either a good thing (spurring innovation) or a bad thing (depleting scarce resources). But an analysis of dependency ratios tells us that what's critical is not just the growth of a population but its structure. "The introduction of demographics has reduced the need for the argument that there was something exceptional about East Asia or idiosyncratic to Africa," Bloom and Canning write, in their study of the Irish economic miracle. "Once age-structure dynamics are introduced into an economic growth model, these regions are much closer to obeying common principles of economic growth."

This is an important point. People have talked endlessly of Africa's political and social and economic shortcomings and simultaneously of some magical cultural ingredient possessed by South Korea and Japan and Taiwan that has brought them success. But the truth is that sub-Saharan Africa has been mired in a debilitating 1-to-1 ratio for decades, and that proportion of dependency would frustrate and complicate economic development anywhere. Asia, meanwhile, has seen its demographic load lighten overwhelmingly in the past thirty years. Getting to a 1-to-2.5 ratio doesn't make economic success inevitable. But, given a reasonably functional economic and political infrastructure, it certainly makes it a lot easier.

This demographic logic also applies to companies, since any employer that offers pensions and benefits to its employees has to deal with the consequences of its nonworker-to-worker ratio, just as a country does. An employer that promised, back in the nineteen-fifties, to pay for its employees' health care when they were retired didn't set aside the money for that while they were working. It just paid the bills as they came in: money generated by current workers was used to pay for the costs of taking care of past workers. Pensions worked roughly the same way. On the day a company set up a pension plan, it was immediately on the hook for all the years of service accumulated by employees up to that point: the worker who was sixty-four when the pension was started got a pension when he retired at sixty-five, even though he had been in the system only a year. That debt is called a "past service" obligation, and in some cases in the nineteen-forties and fifties the past-service obligations facing employers were huge. At Ford, the amount reportedly came to two hundred million dollars, or just under three thousand dollars per employee. At Bethlehem Steel, it came to four thousand dollars per worker.

Companies were required to put aside a little extra money every year to make up for that debt, with the hope of someday—twenty or thirty years down the line—becoming fully funded. In practice, though, that was difficult. Suppose that a company agrees to give its workers a pension of fifty dollars a month for every year of service. Several years later, after a round of contract negotiations, that multiple is raised to sixty dollars a month. That increase applies retroactively: now that company has a brand-new past-service obligation equal to another ten dollars for every month served by its wage employees. Or suppose the stock market goes into decline or interest rates fall, and the company discovers that its pension plan has less money than it had expected. Now it's behind again: it has to go back to using the money generated by current workers in order to take care of the costs of past workers. "You start off in the hole," Steven Sass, a pension expert at Boston College, says. "And the problem in these plans is that it's very difficult to dig your way out."

Charlie Wilson's promise to his workers, then, contained an audacious assumption about G.M.'s dependency ratio: that the company would always have enough active workers to cover the costs of its retired workers—that it would always be like Ireland, and never like sub-Saharan Africa. Wilson's promise, in other words, was actually a gamble. Is it any wonder that the prospect of private pensions made people like Walter Reuther so nervous?



The most influential management theorist of the twentieth century was Peter Drucker, who, in 1950, wrote an extraordinarily prescient article for *Harper's* entitled "The Mirage of Pensions." It ought to be reprinted for every steelworker, airline mechanic, and autoworker who is worried about his retirement. Drucker simply couldn't see how the pension plans on the table at companies like G.M. could ever work. "For such a plan to give real security, the financial strength of the company and its economic success must be reasonably secure for the next forty years," Drucker wrote. "But is there any one company or any one industry whose future can be predicted with certainty for even ten years ahead?" He concluded, "The recent pension plans thus offer no more security against the big bad wolf of old age than the little piggy's house of straw."

In the mid-nineteen-fifties, the largest steel mill in the world was at Sparrows Point, just east of Baltimore, on the Chesapeake Bay. It was owned by Bethlehem Steel, one of the nation's grandest industrial enterprises. The steel for the Golden Gate Bridge came from Sparrows Point, as did the cables for the George Washington Bridge, and the materials for countless guns and planes and ships that helped win both world wars. Sparrows Point, a so-called integrated mill, used a method of making steel that dated back to the nineteenth century. Coke and iron, the raw materials, were combined in a blast furnace to make liquid pig iron. The pig iron was poured into a vast oven, known as an open-hearth furnace, to make molten steel. The steel was poured into pots to make ingots. The ingots were cooled, reheated, and fed into a half-mile-long rolling mill and turned into semi-finished shapes, which eventually became girders for the construction industry or wafer-thin sheets for beer cans or galvanized panels for the automobile industry. Open-hearth steelmaking was expensive and time-consuming. It required great amounts of energy, water, and space. Sparrows Point stretched four miles from one end to the other. Most important, it required lots and lots of people. Sparrows Point, at its height, employed tens of thousands of them. As Mark Reutter demonstrates in "Making Steel," his comprehensive history of Sparrows Point, it was not just a steel mill. It was a city.

In 1956, Eugene Grace, the head of Bethlehem Steel, was the country's best-paid executive. Eleven of the country's eighteen top-earning executives that year, in fact, worked for Bethlehem Steel. In 1955, when the American Iron and Steel Institute had its annual meeting, at the Waldorf-Astoria, in New York, the No. 2 at Bethlehem Steel, Arthur Homer, made a bold forecast: domestic demand for steel, he said, would increase by fifty per cent over the next fifteen years. "As someone has said, the American people are wanters," he told the audience of twelve hundred industry executives. "Their wants are going to require a great deal of steel."

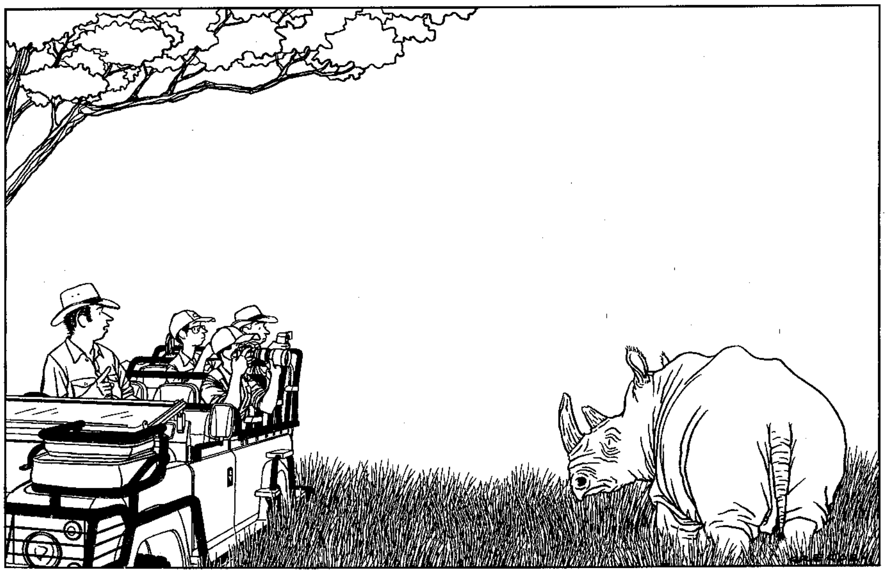
But Big Steel didn't get bigger. It got smaller. Imports began to take a larger and larger share of the American steel market. The growing use of aluminum, concrete, and plastic cut deeply into the demand for steel. And the steelmaking process changed. Instead of laboriously making steel from scratch, with coke and iron ore, factories increasingly just melted down scrap metal. The open-hearth furnace was replaced with the basic oxygen furnace, which could make the same amount of steel in about a tenth of the time. Steelmakers switched to continuous casting, which meant that you skipped the ingot phase altogether and poured your steel products directly out of the furnace. As a result, steelmakers like Bethlehem were no longer hiring young workers to replace the people who retired. They were laying people off by the thousands. But every time they laid off another employee they turned a money-making steelworker into a money-losing retiree—and their dependency ratio got a little worse. According to Reutter, Bethlehem had a hundred and sixty-four thousand workers in 1957. By the mid-to-late-nineteen-eighties, it was down to thirty-five thousand workers, and employment at Sparrows Point had fallen to seventy-nine hundred. In 2001, Bethlehem, just shy of its hundredth birthday, declared bankruptcy. It had twelve thousand active employees and ninety thousand retirees and their spouses drawing benefits. It had reached what might be a record-setting dependency ratio of 7.5 pensioners for every worker.

What happened to Bethlehem, of course, is what happened throughout American industry in the postwar period. Technology led to great advances in productivity, so that when the bulge of workers hired in the middle of the century retired and began drawing pensions, there was no one replacing them in the workforce. General Motors today makes more cars and trucks than it did in the early nineteen-sixties, but it does so with about a third of the employees. In 1962, G.M. had four hundred and sixty-four thousand U.S. employees and was paying benefits to forty thousand retirees and their spouses, for a dependency ratio of one pensioner to 11.6 employees. Last year, it had a hundred and forty-one thousand workers and paid benefits to four hundred and fifty-three thousand retirees, for a dependency ratio of 3.2 to 1.

Looking at General Motors and the old-line steel companies in demographic terms substantially changes the way we understand their problems. It is a commonplace assumption, for instance, that they were undone by overly generous union contracts. But, when dependency ratios start getting up into the 3-to-1 to 7-to-1 range, the issue is not so much what you are paying each dependent as how many dependents you are paying. "There is this notion that there is a Cadillac being provided to all these retirees," Ron Bloom, a senior official at the United Steelworkers, says. "It's not true. The truth is seventy-five-year-old widows living on less than three hundred dollars to four hundred dollars a month. It's just that there's a *lot* of them."

A second common assumption is that fading industrial giants like G.M. and Bethlehem are victims of their own managerial incompetence. In various ways, they undoubtedly are. But, with respect to the staggering burden of benefit obligations, what got them in trouble isn't what they did wrong; it is what they did right. They got in trouble in the nineteen-nineties because they were around in the nineteen-fifties—and survived to pay for the retirement of the workers they hired forty years ago. They got in trouble because they innovated, and became more efficient in their use of labor.

"We are making as much steel as we made thirty years ago with twenty-five per cent of the workforce," Michael Locker, a steel-industry consultant, says. "And it is a much higher quality of steel,



"They may seem slow and peaceful, but don't underestimate their anti-American rage."

• •

too. There is simply no comparison. That change recasts the industry and it recasts the workforce. You get this enormous bulge. It's abnormal. It's not predicted, and it's not funded. Is that the fault of the steelworkers? Is that the fault of the companies?"

Here, surely, is the absurdity of a system in which individual employers are responsible for providing their own employee benefits. It penalizes companies for doing what they *ought* to do. General Motors, by American standards, has an old workforce: its average worker is much older than, say, the average worker at Google. That has an immediate effect: health-care costs are a linear function of age. The average cost of health insurance for an employee between the ages of thirty-five and thirty-nine is $3,759 a year, and for someone between the ages of sixty and sixty-four it is $7,622. This goes a long way toward explaining why G.M. has an estimated sixty-two billion dollars in health-care liabilities. The current arrangement discourages employers from hiring or retaining older workers. But don't we *want* companies to retain older workers—to hire on the basis of ability and not age? In fact, a system in which companies shoulder their own benefits is ultimately a system that penalizes companies for offering any benefits at all. Many employers have simply decided to let their workers fend for themselves. Given what has so publicly and disastrously happened to companies like General Motors, can you blame them?

Or consider the continuous round of discounts and rebates that General Motors—a company that lost $8.6 billion last year—has been offering to customers. If you bought a Chevy Tahoe this summer, G.M. would give you zero-per-cent financing, or six thousand dollars cash back. Surely, if you are losing money on every car you sell, as G.M. is, cutting car prices still further in order to boost sales doesn't make any sense. It's like the old Borsht-belt joke about the haberdasher who lost money on every hat he made but figured he'd make up the difference on volume. The economically rational thing for G.M. to do would be to restructure, and sell fewer cars at a higher profit margin—and that's what G.M. tried to do this summer, announcing plans to shutter plants and buy out the contracts of thirty-five thousand workers. But buyouts, which turn active workers into pensioners, only worsen the company's dependency ratio. Last year, G.M. covered the costs of its four hundred and fifty-three thousand retirees and their dependents with the revenue from 4.5 million cars and trucks. How is G.M. better off covering the costs of four hundred and eighty-eighty thousand dependents with the revenue from, say, 4.2 million cars and trucks? This is the impossible predicament facing the company's C.E.O., Rick Wagoner. Demographic logic requires him to sell more cars and hire more workers; financial logic requires him to sell fewer cars and hire fewer workers.

"We'll be single again in Heaven, right?"

Under the circumstances, one of the great mysteries of contemporary American politics is why Wagoner isn't the nation's leading proponent of universal health care and expanded social welfare. That's the only way out of G.M.'s dilemma. But, from Wagoner's reticence on the issue, you'd think that it was still 1950, or that Wagoner believes he's the Prime Minister of Ireland. "One thing I've learned is that corporate America has got much more class solidarity than we do—meaning union people," the U.S.W.'s Ron Bloom says. "They really are afraid of getting thrown out of their country clubs, even though their objective ought to be maximizing value for their shareholders."

David Bloom, the Harvard economist, once did a calculation in which he combined the dependency ratios of Africa and Western Europe. He found that they fit together almost perfectly; that is, Africa has plenty of young people and not a lot of older people and Western Europe has plenty of old people and not a lot of young people, and if you combine the two you have an even distribution of old and young. "It makes you think that if there is more international migration, that could smooth things out," Bloom said.

Of course, you can't take the populations of different countries and different cultures and simply merge them, no matter how much demographic sense that might make. But you can do that with companies within an economy. If the retiree obligations of Bethlehem Steel had been pooled with those of the much younger industries that supplanted steel—aluminum, say, or plastic—Bethlehem Steel might have made it. If you combined the obligations of G.M., with its four hundred and fifty-three thousand retirees, and the American manufacturing operations of Toyota, with a mere two hundred and fifty-eight retirees, Toyota could help G.M. shoulder its burden, and thirty or forty years from now—when those G.M. retirees are dead and Toyota's now youthful workforce has turned gray—G.M. could return the favor. For that matter, if you pooled the obligations of every employer in the country, no company would go bankrupt just because it happened to employ older people, or it happened to have been around for a while, or it happened to have made the transformation from open-hearth furnaces and ingot-making to basic oxygen furnaces and continuous casting. This is what Walter Reuther and the other union heads understood more than fifty years ago: that in the free-market system it makes little sense for the burdens of insurance to be borne by one company. If the risks of providing for health care and old-age pensions are shared by all of us, then companies can succeed or fail based on what they do and not on the number of their retirees.

When Bethlehem Steel filed for bankruptcy, it owed about four billion dollars to its pension plan, and had another three billion dollars in unmet health-care obligations. Two years later, in 2003, the pension fund was terminated and handed over to the federal government's Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation. The assets of the company—Sparrows Point and a handful of other steel mills in the Midwest—were sold to the New York-based investor Wilbur Ross.

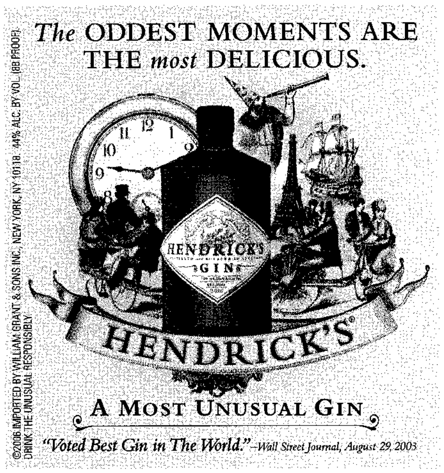
Ross acted quickly. He set up a small trust fund to help defray Bethlehem's unmet retiree health-care costs, cut a deal with the union to streamline work rules, put in place a new 401(k) savings plan—and then started over. The new Bethlehem Steel had a dependency ratio of 0 to 1. Within about six months, it was profitable. The main problem with the American steel business wasn't the steel business, Ross showed. It was all the things that had nothing to do with the steel business.

Not long ago, Ross sat in his sparse midtown office and explained what he had learned from his rescue of Bethlehem. Ross is in his sixties, a Yale- and Harvard-educated patrician with small rectangular glasses and impeccable manners. Outside his office, by the elevator, was a large sculpture of a bull, papered over from head to hoof with stock tables.

"When we showed up to the Bethlehem board to approve the deal, they had an army of people there," Ross said. "The whole board was there, the whole senior management was there, people from Credit Suisse and Greenhill were there. They must have had about fifty or sixty people there for a deal that was already done. So my partner and I—just the two of us—show up, and they say, 'Well, we should wait for the rest of your team.' And we said, 'There is no rest of the team, there is just the two of us.' It said the whole thing right there."

Ross isn't a fan of old-style pensions, because they make it impossible to run a company efficiently. "When a company gets in trouble and restructures," he said, those underfunded pension funds "will eat it alive." And how much sense does employer-provided health insurance make? Bethlehem made promises to its employees, years ago, to give them medical insurance in exchange for their labor, and when the company ran into trouble those promises simply evaporated. "Every country against which we compete has universal health care," he said. "That means we probably face a fifteen-per-cent cost disadvantage versus foreigners for no other reason than historical accident. . . . The randomness of our system is just not going to work."

This is what Walter Reuther believed. He went along with Wilson's scheme in 1950 because he thought that agreeing with Wilson was the surest way of getting Wilson and the other captains of industry to agree with him. "Reuther and his brain trust had a theory of capitalism," Nelson Lichtenstein, the Reuther biographer, says. "It was: If we force G.M. to pay extra, we can create an incentive for G.M. to join our side." Reuther believed, in other words, that when American corporations reached the point where they couldn't make their business more efficient without making it less profitable, when their dependency ratios soared to unimaginable heights, when they got tens of billions behind in their health-care obligations, when the cost of carrying thousands of retirees forced them to stare bankruptcy in the face, they would come around to the idea that the markets work best when the burdens of benefits are broadly shared. It has taken half a century, but the world may finally be catching up with Walter Reuther. ♦


The ODDEST MOMENTS ARE THE *most* DELICIOUS.

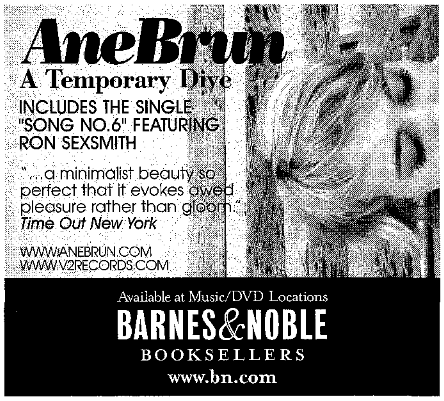
HENDRICK'S GIN

HENDRICK'S

A MOST UNUSUAL GIN

"Voted Best Gin in The World." —*Wall Street Journal, August 29, 2003*

©2006 IMPORTED BY WILLIAM GRANT & SONS INC, NEW YORK, NY 10118. 44% ALC. BY VOL. (88 PROOF). DRINK THE UNUSUAL RESPONSIBLY.


AneBrun

A Temporary Dive

INCLUDES THE SINGLE "SONG NO.6" FEATURING RON SEXSMITH

"...a minimalist beauty so perfect that it evokes awed pleasure rather than gloom." *Time Out New York*

WWW.ANEBRUN.COM
WWW.V2RECORDS.COM

Available at Music/DVD Locations

BARNES&NOBLE
BOOKSELLERS
www.bn.com

davidmorgan.com

David Morgan 800-324-4934

11812 N Creek Pkwy N, Suite 103•Bothell WA 98011

10 Million Pieces!

China, Crystal, Silver, Collectibles

183,000 Patterns • Old/New • Buy/Sell

REPLACEMENTS, LTD.®

1-800-REPLACE (1-800-737-5223)

PO Box 26029, Greensboro, NC 27420 • Dept YO

www.replacements.com®

GARY WEEKS & COMPANY
FURNITURE MAKERS

Comfort and satisfaction guaranteed or your money back, including shipping.

888-334-0307
www.garyweeks.com

Undiscovered Italy

Free Catalog: 800-280-2811

Villa Rentals

ParkerVillas

www.parkervillas.com

SHOUTS & MURMURS

PROCLAMATION

BY GEORGE SAUNDERS

TEHRAN, Iran (July 29)—Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad has ordered government and cultural bodies to use modified Persian words to replace foreign words that have crept into the language, such as "pizzas," which will now be known as "elastic loaves." —*Associated Press.*

O.K., so this is it. I am telling you now. Our jihad declares this: no more English. Wait, I know. I am speaking English, but just this one last time. No more English, once I am done speaking. When done speaking, I will do that zipping thing one does with the lips, and after that: our glorious linguistic jihad begins! It is going to really kick ass. However, hang on. "Kick ass" does not please the Prophet. How do I know? I just do. From now on, we will say, like: Our new linguistic jihad is really going to "put the foot in the old rumpus." Got it? Or "rumpamundo" is O.K. "Put the foot in the old rumpamundo." Yes, yes, I like that.

Some of you have asked, "Mahmoud, why are we doing this?" One even asked, "Mahmoud, why the heck are we doing this"—more about "heck" later, but for now . . . Remember, back in the seventies, when we took those American, uh, "visitors who did not intend to stay quite so long as they did, in fact, stay"? At the time everyone was going, "No, no, Mahmoud, bad idea"—but look how great it turned out! Now everyone is futzing over us, because why? Because we asserted our— Oh, right, no, you're right, absolutely, we must also purge our language of the expressions of the blood-drinkers. So "futz"? No. Thanks for pointing that out. How about "fuss"? "Fussing around"? What do you think? Show of hands? Too similar? O.K., instead of "futz," let it be, uh . . . let me get back to you on that one.

But you see my point. When we draw a line in the sand with the Western imperialists, they pay attention. When we try to be nice, they treat us badly. I write the guy a sixteen-page letter, and don't even get a note back! I put a lot of thought into that! I did, like, three drafts! I was trying to be an "egg that is good"! I was trying to offer "the branch of the olive"! But that "one who fucks" treated me like I was some "stupid rectum" from "HoboIntercourse"!

My friends, I am a simple man. That is why you elected me. I have never been anywhere other than our beloved country. I actually haven't even been to that many places here in our beloved country. I have pretty much been here in my beloved house, non-stop, since the seventies. In my beloved room. With the door locked. Having nightmares in which Hulk Hogan is waiting outside my room—look, as for Hulk Hogan, do not mention his name ever again! He will be referred to, if we even *need* to refer to him, which I doubt, as "Blond Blondie, Big Blondie!" In this way, we will disrespect him! In this way, he will be driven from my dreams! No more sneaking up behind me, "Blond Blondie, Big Blondie!," and putting me in a headlock, and I am naked, and have forgotten to study for all my exams!

No. For us, all Western decadence is finished. McDonald's, chief villain of the American imperialist program, will henceforth be known as "Burger King." That will really mess with everybody's head. Some enemy of the revolution here in Tehran goes into a McDon— Do we still even have McDonald's? I used to really like the cheeseburgers. The "snack that is surprisingly caloric because, you sense, there is even sugar in the bun." Anyway, some enemy of the revolution goes into a McDonald's, orders a Big Mac, and—ha ha!—he is really in Burger King. I love it! He is undone.

Similarly, Burger King will be known as "Wendy's," KFC will be known as "Home Depot," Farouq's Funeral Home will be known as "Blockbuster Video," and Pamela Anderson will be known as "Mrs. President of Iran." Joking! I know she is already married! Didn't she just— Well, in any event, I am. At least, I think I am. Can you get my wife on my cell? Is this going out live? That Pam Anderson thing might have rubbed her the wrong—

Speaking of *women*, that is another thing: don't you find that word provocative? Say it a few times, softly, kind of moaning it to yourself, while picturing some slut undulating. See what I mean? Provocative. So that is why we are outlawing that as well. No, just the word. At least for now.

Henceforth, let us call our sisters "that which is too hot to be seen." Or should it be "that whom are too hot to be seen"? To tell the truth, I am not nuts about the word "hot." It makes me . . . well, it makes me hot. Say it, kind of stretch it out: *hot*. No, that won't do. We shall call them "those who are dangerous to see, due to they are nasty, which is why we shall henceforth hide them under the new immense heavy tents of steel for which I own the patent."

Have I mentioned that? I am decided. Women are just too hot. Even in chadors, they are too damn hot. Try it, say it, really slowly, kind of prolonging the "ch" sound: *chador*. Right? See what I mean? So the chadors are off (stop it!) and the "comfort tents" are on. Here is one now. See how weighty, totally opaque (and therefore form-concealing) it is? This way, "those who are dangerous to see, due to they are nasty, which is why we, etc., etc." will no longer be able to make any sudden sexy moves, or be seen at all, even when a bright light is shining right on them (during, say, an interrogation), or have a free thought, since they are essentially being perpetually crushed by about a quarter ton of steel, like wearing a damn VW bug.

Oops. Sorry. My bad. Did not mean to say "VW." Meant to say "Volkswagen." And did not mean to say "damn." Meant to say "frigging." Ha ha! Joking.

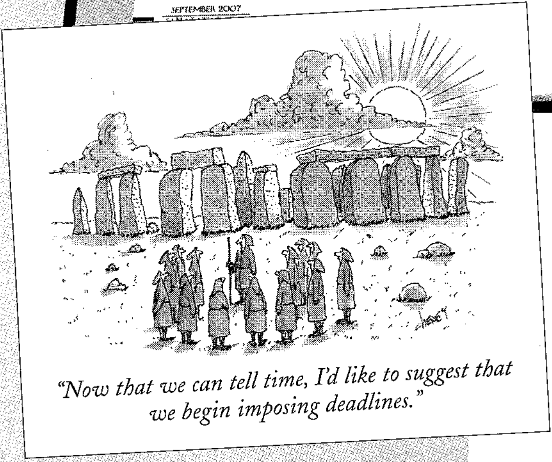
Let no one say our revolution is without humor. Anyone says that, I will put my foot in his old rumpamundo in a way he will not soon forget. Trust me on this. I will "install, via rippage, an entirely new down-low-nasty-nasty orifice-stinky," brother, and pronto, please believe me.

Because guess what? I have nukes coming. "Slender death-containing tubes by which righteousness shall be enforced, as per me."

I shit you not. ♦

Advertisement

THE 2007 NEW YORKER DESK DIARY



"Now that we can tell time, I'd like to suggest that we begin imposing deadlines."

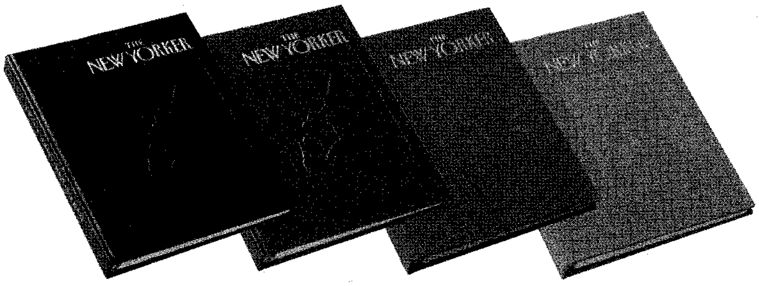
Two easy ways to order:

www.cartoonbank.com
Order online to save $5 and receive **FREE** personalization.

1-877-408-4269
Order by calling toll-free
M-F, 9 A.M.-6 P.M., E.S.T.

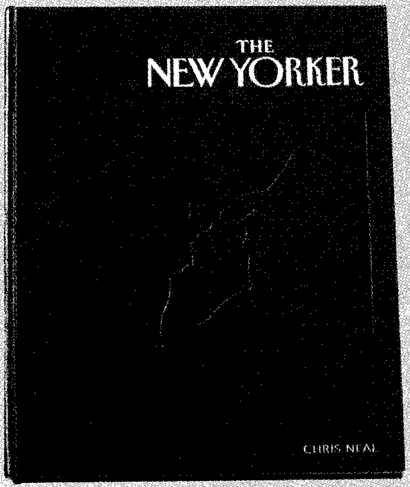
Featuring:
- Elegant new cover design
- Vibrant colors with matching ribbon marker
- Big 7 ¼" x 10" pages
- Spiral-bound to lie flat
- And much more

Available in four colors:



Classic Blue with silver stamping
Ruby Red with gold stamping
Dusty Teal Linen with silver stamping
NEW Wheat Linen with gold stamping

Order early to receive your favorite color.



FREE personalization when you order online

Online: $29.95* each; FREE personalization
Phone: $34.95* each; $37.95* each with personalization

*Please add $7.00 U.S. shipping & handling for each diary. ($10.00 to Canada.) Add applicable sales tax where required by law.

also available at THE NEW YORKER STORE **www.thenewyorkerstore.com**

ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

THE
NEW YORKER
ONLINE

newyorker.com

WEB EXCLUSIVES:

Jon Lee Anderson reports on a tour of south Lebanon: an audio slide show with photographs by Samantha Appleton.

Richard Ford talks with *New Yorker* fiction editor Deborah Treisman about growing older with his character Frank Bascombe.

THE HARD DRIVE
An archive of hundreds of past Web exclusives, including Q. & A.s, cover galleries, slide shows, Web sightings, and more.

THE FILM FILE
A decade's worth of New Yorker Film Notes.

EVENTS
A calendar of New Yorker events across the country.

NOW ONLINE:
THE NEW YORKER'S AUDIO EDITION, AVAILABLE AT AUDIBLE.COM/NEWYORKER

BACKSTAGE CHRONICLES

PETRIFIED

The horrors of stagefright.

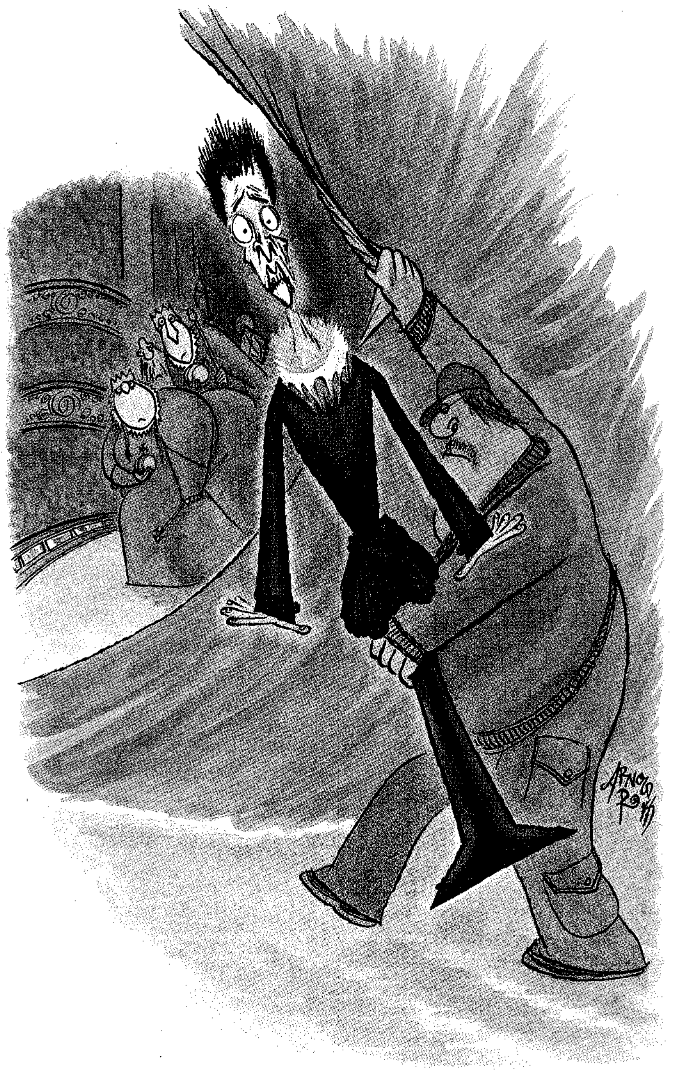
BY JOHN LAHR

In February, 1995, the thirty-seven-year-old British actor and comedian Stephen Fry was starring with another popular British comic, Rik Mayall, in the West End production of Simon Gray's "Cell Mates." Fry had the role of George Blake, a spy and traitor who is sprung from Wormwood Scrubs, where he is serving a forty-two-year sentence, by a prison friend, Sean Bourke, and who then, through a series of stratagems, keeps Bourke living with him in Moscow for two years. Fry, a multifaceted performer (he was Oscar Wilde in the 1997 film "Wilde," and a featured player on Rowan Atkinson's TV comedy "Blackadder"), had "the manners of a convivial prelate," as Gray subsequently wrote in "Fat Chance," his account of the production. On the Sunday after the show's opening, when the weekend reviews hit the stands, however, Fry woke up feeling a "sort of clammy horror." He told me, "I had something to do, something annoying—I had agreed I would do narration for 'Peter and the Wolf' in a church somewhere. I woke up. I looked at the ceiling. I thought, I can't let this person down on 'Peter and the Wolf.' But I can't go back to the theatre. I cannot." He added, "It was just a feeling of impossibility. It's inexplicable. I'd never, ever, had stagefright and I'd done things like appear in front of close to eighty thousand people at Wembley for Nelson Mandela's birthday."

Fry fulfilled his "Peter and the Wolf" obligation at midday, returned to his apartment, wrote a series of letters to his cohorts, and then went into the garage to kill himself. "My finger was on the ignition key," he said. "But then pictures of your mother appear in front of your eyes. You cannot do that to your parents. At least I couldn't. I had tried when I was seventeen." Instead, Fry fled. "I drove to Bruges and struck east through to Germany. I had it in my head that the tip of Jutland would somehow suit me. I would buy a small wooden, quite well-heated hut. I just somehow imagined that British people didn't go there. I would learn Danish. I kind of liked the idea of going around in a big white pullover and a pipe and teaching English in some school in Denmark, meanwhile writing peculiar novels." He added, "I thought I had burned every bridge." Fry's disappearance was a subject of scandal and concern in England, where it dominated the headlines. A substitute was found for "Cell Mates," but the production never recovered, and it closed prematurely three weeks later, with a loss of some three hundred thousand pounds. "I really believed I would never come back to England," Fry said in his documentary "The Secret Life of the Manic Depressive." "I couldn't meet the gaze of anyone I knew."

In a sense, the term "stagefright" is a misnomer—fright being a shock for which one is unprepared. For professional performers, the unmooring terror hits as they prepare to do the very thing they're trained to do. According to one British medical study, actors' stress levels on opening night are equivalent "to that of a car-accident victim." When Sir Laurence Olivier was in his sixties, he considered retiring from the stage because of stagefright. It "is always waiting outside the door," he wrote in "Confessions of an Actor." "You either battle or walk away." The Canadian piano virtuoso Glenn Gould, who suffered from disabling stagefright, did walk away, abandoning the public platform for the privacy of the recording studio. "To me the ideal artist-to-audience relationship is one to zero," he said.

Stagefright is a traumatic, insidious attack on the performer's expressive instrument: the body. According to the psychoanalyst Donald Kaplan, who studied this morbid form of anxiety, the trajectory of stagefright begins with manic agitation and moodiness, proceeds to delusional thinking and obsessional fantasies, and then to "blocking"—the "complete loss of perception and rehearsed function." The actor stiffens, trembles, and grows numb and uncoördinated. His mental and aural processes seize up. His throat tightens, his mouth goes dry, and he has difficulty speaking. The experience, with the metabolic changes it sets off—sweating, confusion, the loss of language—is a simulacrum of dying. "I died out there" or "I corpsed," actors say. In defense against the immobilizing terror, sufferers often split off. They disassociate. They report out-of-body experiences, a sense of watching themselves go by. ("It's a negative ecstasy," Fry says. "Remember that 'ecstasy' means 'to stand outside.' You stand outside yourself.") The actor's feeling of physical as well as mental coherence disintegrates. Instead of being protected, as usual, by the character he is playing, he suddenly stands helpless before the audience as himself; he loses the illusion of invisibility. His authority collapses and he feels naked, as if he were exposing to the judgmental spectators "an image of the man behind the mask," as the anthropologist Erving Goffman puts it. Actors sometimes refer to this momentary collapse as "drying": nothing flows from them to the audience or from the audience to them. "There is this catastrophic loss of confidence," the American psychoanalyst Christopher Bollas, who has treated many stage and screen actors, says. "You lose your radar—like a surfer. You can ride a ten-foot wave with real confidence, not thinking about it, just doing it. Then, all of a sudden, you become too self-aware. You think too much. You get wiped out." The paradox of acting is that, like surfing, it requires both relaxation and concentration. If there is concentration without relaxation, or relaxation without concentration, the performance doesn't work.



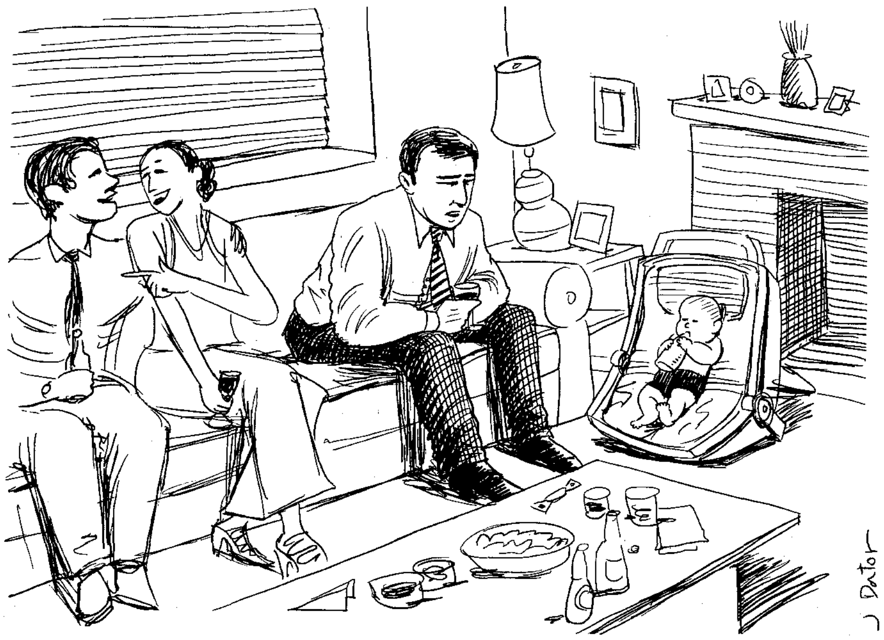
The journey through fear gives performing a kind of nobility.

ARNOLD ROTH

"Composure is repose," the playwright Clifford Odets observed in his diary. What the public wants, and what the performer sells, is the illusion of control, of never being at a loss. The actor is a model of perfect personality, "one who is not wounded, or worried, or maimed, or in danger," as Wilde described it. The performer's poise works as a defense against shame and social threats, both signalling security and creating it, projecting confidence and neutralizing aggression. Poise, according to the analyst Leo Rangell, is a way of recapturing the blissful state of the infant, who develops strategies to insure his mother's collaboration and to prevent the agitation that would lead to his being "put down" or "dropped." Poise is an expression of the desire to be wanted and loved—a form of social security, which is never at play in solitude, when, Rangell writes, "there is no danger from without, no fear of ridicule: one is not at the moment being observed and judged." Actors, of course, watch themselves like hawks. Some, like Noël Coward, turn poise into a philosophy of life: their careers are a perpetual performance of charm. "I have taken a lot of trouble with my public face," Coward said. "Lose yourself and you lose your audience." The psychoanalyst Harvey Corman, speaking of his friend Barbra Streisand, who suffers from chronic stagefright, says, "Her greatest talent isn't acting or singing; it's her ability to hide her fear." ("Break a leg" and "*Merde*"—the backstage mantras for good luck—are acknowledgments of the actor's terror of losing control of his body and of making a mess.)

"Performers don't talk much about stagefright," Ian McKellen wrote in a defense of Fry that was published in the London *Times* in 1996. "The spectre of a tongue turned to stone and vomit where the lines should be is all too frightening to be evoked." One of the few to describe the trauma in detail is the British actor Ian Holm, who abandoned theatre for nearly fifteen years because of it. In 1976, before the final preview of the Royal Shakespeare Company production of "The Iceman Cometh," in which he played the central role of Hickey, Holm, as many sufferers do, had a presentiment of disaster. "I knew—I *knew*—that something was going to happen," he writes in "Acting My Life":

> Somehow I got through the first part of the play, though I do remember sweating in the wings while I was waiting to go on, suddenly feeling cold and clammy, and people asking me if I was all right. Although I did not realize it, I had started to seize up. . . . Then the moment arrived when I knew I would not be able to continue. I was giving a monologue from a chair at the front of the stage. The rest of the cast was behind me and, despite their previous efforts, now unable directly to intervene or assist me. I kept drying, even at one point addressing the audience with something like, "Here I am, supposed to be talking to you . . . there are you, expecting me to talk. . . ." Getting off the stage was quite complicated and involved a choreographed manoeuvre through and past the other actors, who were frozen in a kind of tableau. . . . I had only been off stage for a few moments before I knew some kind of



"So, Carol tells me you're a baby."

> buffer had been reached, that the game was up. I walked briskly past the stage manager, who waved a flimsy arm at me and uttered something polite like, "But you're due back on almost immediately, Mr. Holm."
>
> "I'm off," I replied. "And I'm not coming back." . . .
>
> By the time I got back to the dressing-room area, I had even lost the ability to walk. The black curtain which slowly cowled my brain had become a complete hood. . . . I experienced complete meltdown. I was unable to speak or to focus on anything. My eyes were wild and staring.

Holm ended up being comforted by a fellow-actor backstage. "We were both on the floor, my head in his lap," he writes. "He was caressing me like a child."

The poster for Alfred Hitchcock's 1950 film "Stage Fright" reads, "Hands that applaud can also kill." In fact, it's not the hands of the audience but their observing eyes that are lethal. The pianist and critic Charles Rosen writes, in his mischievous essay "The Aesthetic of Stage Fright," "The silence of the audience is not that of a public that listens but one that *watches*, like the dead hush that accompanies the unsteady movement of the tightrope walker poised over his perilous space." Without an audience, or the fantasy of one, there is no stagefright. The actor's success depends on his ability to conquer the audience, which is why the encounter is so often fraught with excitement and danger. "The relationship is undoubtedly sexual," the British character actress Anna Massey says. "You get to know an audience very, very quickly. Within the first five minutes. They become your friends or they become difficult to woo. Sometimes they're never won." Fry, before his first professional engagement—in Alan Bennett's "Forty Years On"—was found by Paul Eddington, one of the show's seasoned stars, peeping through a hole in the curtain at the sea of strangers. "Never look at the enemy," Eddington told him. Performance is, for the actor, a form of battle—as the idioms of theatrical success make clear: "I killed 'em," "I slaughtered 'em," "I knocked 'em dead."

In the 1989 show "Back with a Vengeance!," Barry Humphries, as the "housewife / superstar" Dame Edna Everage, perfectly parsed the role of the audience and the effect that its cruel gaze can have on frightened actors; he also made the audience itself feel the fear. At one point in the show, Dame Edna patrolled the edge of the stage in her high heels and diamanté harlequin glasses, looking for someone from the first six rows "to do nude cartwheels onstage." "And now the mood has completely changed, hasn't it?" she said.

> "I don't know what you'd call it. Blind terror, I think, don't you. . . . But don't be nervous. Please . . . Supposing I chose, for argument's sake . . . you! In the third row. Yes. Yes. What is your name?"
>
> "Emma."
>
> "Hello, Emma. Have you done much cartwheel work? We've found audiences prefer an amateur nude cartwheelist, they do. They have a way of falling over which is vulnerable . . . and, well . . . strangely appealing. Don't scratch your eczema, Emma. Because you will not know you're doing these cartwheels, Emma. Do you know why? You'll be in deep shock, Emma. You will. Because whenever we women are very, very frightened, our bodies do a funny thing. . . . Did you know, Emma, that we women have a little wee gland about half the size of a little fingernail tucked in an intimate nook? . . . This gland of ours, Emma, has a duct jointed on to it. . . . And whenever we women have to do something a little, oh, unacceptable or even a little bit yucky, Emma, you know what this funny little gland of ours does? Do you? It squirts. It squirts. And it oozes. And drips. And we black out, Emma. . . . And that'll be you. You will literally not know that you've been tonight's nude-cartwheel girl until you're leaving the theatre and you notice people pointing and laughing at you. And saying things like 'She wasn't a natural blonde, was she?' "

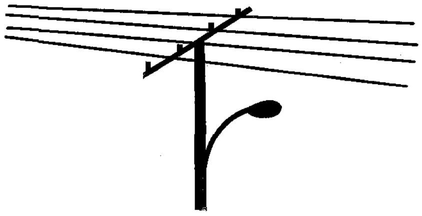
All the central traumas of childhood—being alone, abandoned, unsupported, emotionally abused—are revived for an actor when he appears before the paying customers, who have the power to either starve him of affection or reward him with approval. What the child gets from his mother—rapt focus, adoration, a sense of self—is what the actor needs from the audience. When things are going well, the stage and the house merge and a sort of imaginative union is achieved. The intimacy is palpable on both sides of the footlights; the audience seems to breathe with the actors. "There is brilliant intellectual clarity, a sense of boundless, inexhaustible energy as the chambers of the brain open up," Holm says of a successful performance. "Your whole existence is lit up by a dazzling sense of potential." Fry, explaining why he put himself through the stress of acting, says, "You're trying to recapture the 'first fine, careless rapture.' The first time you felt king of time and space, the first spinning joy of it all."

When the actor cannot make contact and the audience withholds its affection, however, the experience brings back a primal anxiety. "Every time I went onstage, there was that heavy feeling," Fry says. "I felt the audience was not on my side almost from the get-go. . . . It was a sweaty sense of not being in control . . . constantly behind rather than ahead." He adds, "Everybody else had some transformative magic power that was completely denied me. I had no business being there." Fry blames his attack of stagefright partly on a scene that he had to perform in his underwear. "I was putting on a lot of weight," he says. "I was clearly a middle-aged man with a big gut." The audience, he adds, "sees the shrivelled penis in your head." For Olivier, whose much loved mother died when he was twelve, the audience was, to some degree, his parsimonious father. "My father couldn't see the slightest purpose in my existence," Olivier wrote. "Everything about me irritated him. I was an entirely unnecessary extra burden on the exchequer." In what seemed to be a gesture of preëmptive defiance, before a show Olivier used to stand behind the curtain muttering at the audience over and over, "You bastards." Shirley MacLaine, contemplating the unfathomable energy and fierce focus of Frank Sinatra, with whom she worked for a time, came to the conclusion that "it has more to do with remaining a perpetual performing child who wants to please the mother audience." She continued, "He desperately needed her to love him, appreciate him, acknowledge him, and never betray his trust. So he would cajole, manipulate, caress, admonish, scold, and love her unconditionally until there was no difference between him and her."

The parent in the audience who needs to be won over is also, in some cases, a theatre critic. In "Fat Chance," Simon Gray makes it clear that a bad review played a large role in Fry's stagefright. Gray remembers reading Fry's "ambiguous suicide letter" to one of the producer's associates, Peter Wilkins. "Wherever he was going, whether to his untimely end, or into a hospital, or a monastery, or just into hiding," Gray writes, "the letter made it unequivocally clear that (a) he wasn't going to appear in 'Cell Mates' again, indeed was never going to act again, and (b) the reason for this was he believed that he was letting Rik, me and the whole production down." Gray added, "He followed this with a kind of spiteful lampoon on himself—'the lumpen, superior "act" which I inflict on a bored audience every time I open my mouth.' " Gray recalls hearing Wilkins let out "something that sounded like a gasp":

> WILKINS: But that's the *Financial Times* review.
>
> ME: What?
>
> WILKINS: Almost word for word. The *Financial Times* review.

Fry, who claimed not to read reviews, had gone out and bought the Sunday papers; if the actor couldn't actually see the judgmental eye of the audience from the stage, the words of the critic were in cold type and impossible to miss. "Fry is the all-time façade: so damnably English on the one hand, and so perplexingly inexpressive on the other," Alastair Macaulay had written in the *Financial Times*. The impact of the review was, Fry says, "phenomenal." He describes the sense of acute self-consciousness and loss of confidence that followed as "stage dread," a sort of "paradigm shift." He says, "It's not 'Look at me—I'm flying.' It's 'Look at me—I might fall.' It would be like playing a game of chess where you're constantly regretting the moves you've already played rather than looking at the ones you're going to play." Fry could not mobilize his defenses; unable to shore himself up, he took himself away. E-mails from his father and from Hugh Laurie, his friend and comedy partner, eventually found Fry in Hamburg and coaxed him to return briefly. By then, he'd seen his name in headlines and pictures of the police clamoring around his family's home in Norfolk. After a stint in America, staying first at John Cleese's Santa Barbara beach house and then at an apartment he'd bought in New York, Fry went back to his London flat in the fall of 1995. Around that time, he was asked to star in the Oscar Wilde bio-pic. "The idea that so much faith was put in me was a big thing," he says. "The film was one of the happiest experiences of my life." Since "the Debacle," as he calls it, Fry has written six books, appeared in several films, including the Academy Award-winning "Gosford Park," and made a handful of documentaries. He has not, however, returned to the stage.



Stagefright, with its ties to both terror and shame, inspires a powerful desire to hide. "I was always looking for exits, literally looking for ways to escape," the singer and songwriter Carly Simon, who suffers from chronic stagefright, told me. "It felt claustrophobic being in the spotlight and being expected to finish a song. So I left myself the leeway of being able to leave the stage at the end of every song. What I tell myself now is 'If I just get through the song, I'll be able to leave.' " Olivier wrote of his famous performance in "Othello," "I had to beg my Iago, Frank Finlay, not to leave the stage when I had to be left alone for a soliloquy, but to stay in the wings downstage where I could see him, since I feared I might not be able to stay there in front of the audience by myself."

The entertainer's journey through fear is the burden and the blessing of performance; it's what invests the enterprise with bravery, even a kind of nobility. "There was no other treatment than the well-worn practice of wearing *it*—the terror—out," Olivier wrote. The battle takes many strange and creative forms. Some performers drink to give themselves courage; some pop beta-blockers; some meditate or practice various other tension-reducing exercises; some play inspirational videos in their dressing rooms; some, like Charles Rosen, simply see stagefright as an inevitable and appropriate result of a virtuoso's perfectionism. "Stagefright is not merely symbolically but functionally necessary, like the dread of a candidate before an examination or a job interview, both designed essentially as a test of courage," Rosen writes. "Stagefright, like epilepsy, is a divine ailment, a sacred madness. . . . It is a grace that is sufficient in the old Jesuit sense—that is, insufficient by itself but a necessary condition for success."

One of Olivier's ways of coping with stagefright was to ask his fellow-actors not to look him in the eye. "They generously agreed, and managed to look attentively to either side of my face," he wrote, of his performance as Shylock in the National Theatre production of "The Merchant of Venice," in 1970. "For some reason this made me feel that there was not quite so much loaded against me." Fry had the opposite experience. "If you're going well, the one thing you hate is being onstage with an actor who won't look you in the eye," he says. "If they're not going to meet your eye, there's something wrong with them, or they think there's something wrong with you."

Sviatoslav Richter, whom Prokofiev thought "the best pianist . . . in the whole world," coped with his stagefright by turning the lights on the audience and—except for a reading light on his sheet music—off himself. The illusion of invisibility freed Richter and allowed the listener, he said, "to concentrate on the music rather than on the performer." Some performers, like Carly Simon, on the other hand, choose to have the lights on the audience "because of the empathic reaction." She says, "When I feel I don't have the audience, when they're not warm, I'll pick out one person, usually in the first four rows, and sing a song directly to that person. He or she will get embarrassed and turn to people on his right or left. Therefore the embarrassment, or the focus I'm putting on him, takes it away from me."

On tour in 1995, Simon discovered that another way to handle her stagefright was to lie down onstage. "Rock and roll is so good because it accepts so much," she said. "I had a couch onstage so that I could be languorous. . . . I could ease my way up to the mike. I do it in stages. I'm lying down on the couch, then I put my knees around and I sit up, and then I stand up at the end of the first song." These days, Simon says, eighty per cent of the time she has beaten her stagefright before she's vertical. As part of her arsenal of attack, she keeps a hairbrush under the couch cushions so that she can brush her hair during the set, a gesture that helps to calm her palpitations. Simon has found that physical pain often trumps psychological terror. "If you have something that's hurting you physically, the pain is the hierarchy," she said. To that end, she has been known to take the stage in tight boots, to jab her hand with clutched safety pins, and even, just before going on, to ask band members to spank her. At a celebration for President Bill Clinton's fiftieth birthday, at Radio City Music Hall, in 1996, Simon, terrified of following Smokey Robinson, invited the entire horn section to let her have it. "They all took turns spanking me," she says. "During the last spank the curtain went up. The audience saw the aftermath, the sting on my face. I bet Olivier didn't do that."

The acting coach Susan Batson, whose clients include Juliette Binoche, Jennifer Lopez, and Nicole Kidman, advises her students to try to displace the fear onto the role they're playing, to make it part of the performance, part of what she calls the "previous circumstances" of the character. When one of her actors has stagefright, she says, her response is "Can we use this?" Batson considers stagefright a "civilian issue," not an artistic one. "If you are a people pleaser"—worried about whether the audience is going to like you—"you're bound to have stagefright," she told me. "If you have an issue of not feeling like you're good enough, you're bound to have stagefright. The people who survive it are the ones who can take control of the situation and override it."

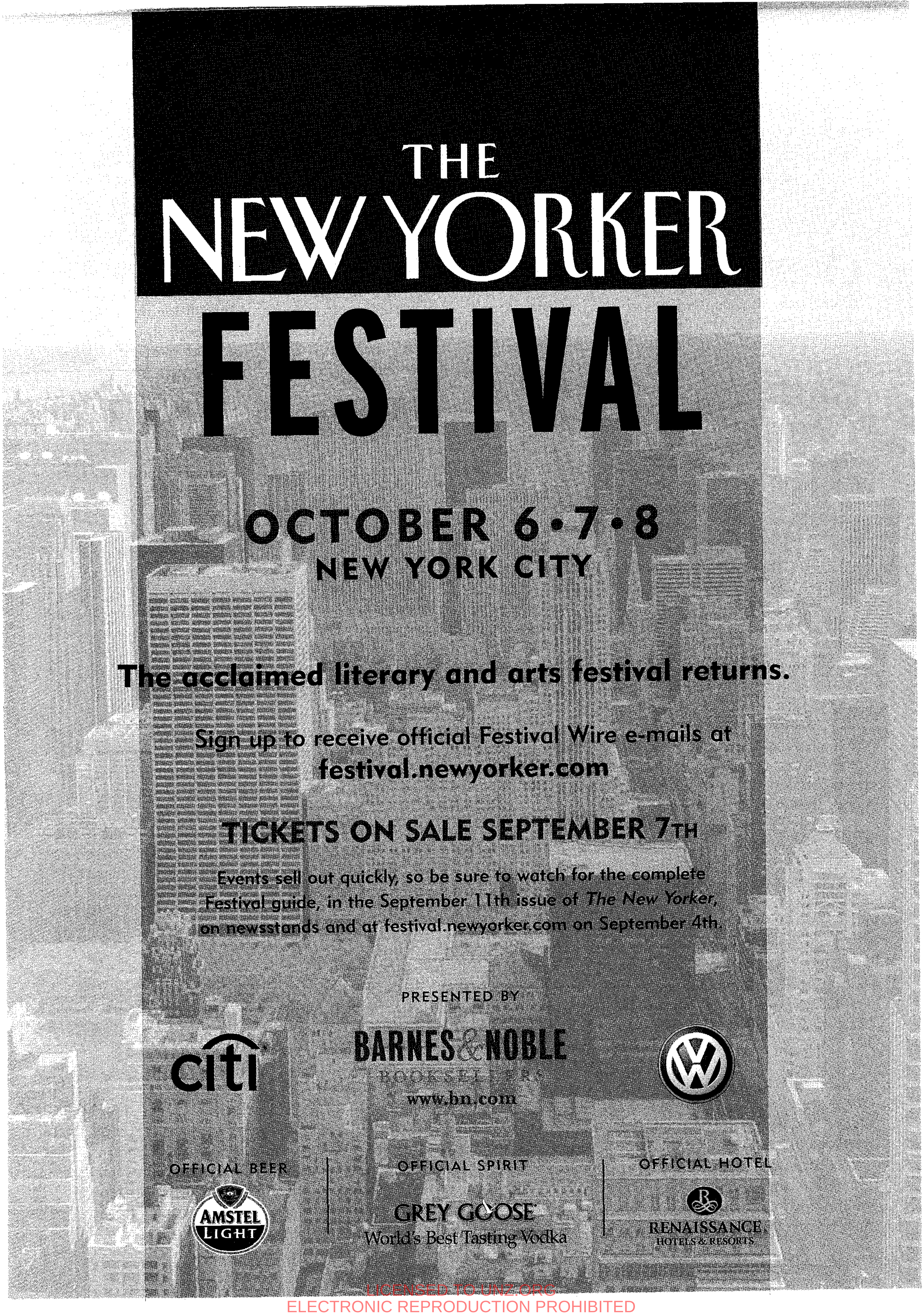
Kidman falls into Batson's "people pleaser" category. "My job with her is to scare her, really terrify her, tell her that she'll do awful work if she continues that kind of shit," Batson says. "Then she gets the courage, and she's O.K." In the early nineties, Kidman wanted to audition for the part of the icy Las Vegas hustler Ginger McKenna, opposite Robert De Niro, in Martin Scorsese's "Casino," a role for which all the Hollywood swamis said she was wrong. "She worked like a dog to prove that she could do it," Batson recalled. On the day Kidman went for her audition, according to Batson, "she felt awkward" and "lost it." Scorsese took her in to meet De Niro, Batson recalled. "She could feel everything just falling apart." Her legs got wobbly and she felt hives coming on, but she pushed ahead and went straight into a scene that required her to strike her co-star. "All she could think of was 'Stay in the character's circumstances.' She reared back, and she slapped the shit out of De Niro." Batson added, "They didn't give her the part"—it went to Sharon Stone—"but they were impressed. That's literally the artist overcoming the terror. She had no choice. She said, 'I was gone. The only thing to do was to do the slapping. To get through.' " Courage generates more courage. "Once you go through it and lift it, you feel very, very courageous. It's a high that you pray everybody has," Batson said. "I'm always terrified of the person who doesn't have it, because it means that the commitment is not fully there." ♦

THIS MORNING

First I had three
apocalyptic visions, each more terrible than the last.
The graves open, and the sea rises to kill us all.
Then the doorbell rang, and I went downstairs and signed for two packages—
one just an envelope, but the other long and bulky, difficult to manage—
both for my neighbor Gus. "You're never not at home,"
the FedEx guy said appreciatively.
It's true. I don't shave, or even wash. I keep the air-conditioners roaring.

Though it's summer,
one of the beautiful red-and-conifer-green Bayside Fuel Oil trucks
that bed down in the depot by the canal
was refreshing the subsurface tanks with black draughts
wrung from the rock, blood of the rock
sucked up from the crevices.
The driver looked unconcerned. Leaning slightly on each other,
Frank and Louise stepped over his hose and walked by slowly,
on the way to their cardiologist.

—*Vijay Seshadri*



THE
NEW YORKER
FESTIVAL

OCTOBER 6•7•8
NEW YORK CITY

The acclaimed literary and arts festival returns.

Sign up to receive official Festival Wire e-mails at
festival.newyorker.com

TICKETS ON SALE SEPTEMBER 7TH

Events sell out quickly, so be sure to watch for the complete Festival guide, in the September 11th issue of *The New Yorker*, on newsstands and at festival.newyorker.com on September 4th.

PRESENTED BY

citi

BARNES&NOBLE
BOOKSELLERS
www.bn.com

VW

OFFICIAL BEER
AMSTEL LIGHT

OFFICIAL SPIRIT
GREY GOOSE
World's Best Tasting Vodka

OFFICIAL HOTEL
R
RENAISSANCE
HOTELS & RESORTS

ANNALS OF MATHEMATICS

MANIFOLD DESTINY

A legendary problem and the battle over who solved it.

BY SYLVIA NASAR AND DAVID GRUBER

On the evening of June 20th, several hundred physicists, including a Nobel laureate, assembled in an auditorium at the Friendship Hotel in Beijing for a lecture by the Chinese mathematician Shing-Tung Yau. In the late nineteen-seventies, when Yau was in his twenties, he had made a series of breakthroughs that helped launch the string-theory revolution in physics and earned him, in addition to a Fields Medal—the most coveted award in mathematics—a reputation in both disciplines as a thinker of unrivalled technical power.

Yau had since become a professor of mathematics at Harvard and the director of mathematics institutes in Beijing and Hong Kong, dividing his time between the United States and China. His lecture at the Friendship Hotel was part of an international conference on string theory, which he had organized with the support of the Chinese government, in part to promote the country's recent advances in theoretical physics. (More than six thousand students attended the keynote address, which was delivered by Yau's close friend Stephen Hawking, in the Great Hall of the People.) The subject of Yau's talk was something that few in his audience knew much about: the Poincaré conjecture, a century-old conundrum about the characteristics of three-dimensional spheres, which, because it has important implications for mathematics and cosmology and because it has eluded all attempts at solution, is regarded by mathematicians as a holy grail.

Yau, a stocky man of fifty-seven, stood at a lectern in shirtsleeves and black-rimmed glasses and, with his hands in his pockets, described how two of his students, Xi-Ping Zhu and Huai-Dong Cao, had completed a proof of the Poincaré conjecture a few weeks earlier. "I'm very positive about Zhu and Cao's work," Yau said. "Chinese mathematicians should have every reason to be proud of such a big success in completely solving the puzzle." He said that Zhu and Cao were indebted to his longtime American collaborator Richard Hamilton, who deserved most of the credit for solving the Poincaré. He also mentioned Grigory Perelman, a Russian mathematician who, he acknowledged, had made an important contribution. Nevertheless, Yau said, "in Perelman's work, spectacular as it is, many key ideas of the proofs are sketched or outlined, and complete details are often missing." He added, "We would like to get Perelman to make comments. But Perelman resides in St. Petersburg and refuses to communicate with other people."

For ninety minutes, Yau discussed some of the technical details of his students' proof. When he was finished, no one asked any questions. That night, however, a Brazilian physicist posted a report of the lecture on his blog. "Looks like China soon will take the lead also in mathematics," he wrote.

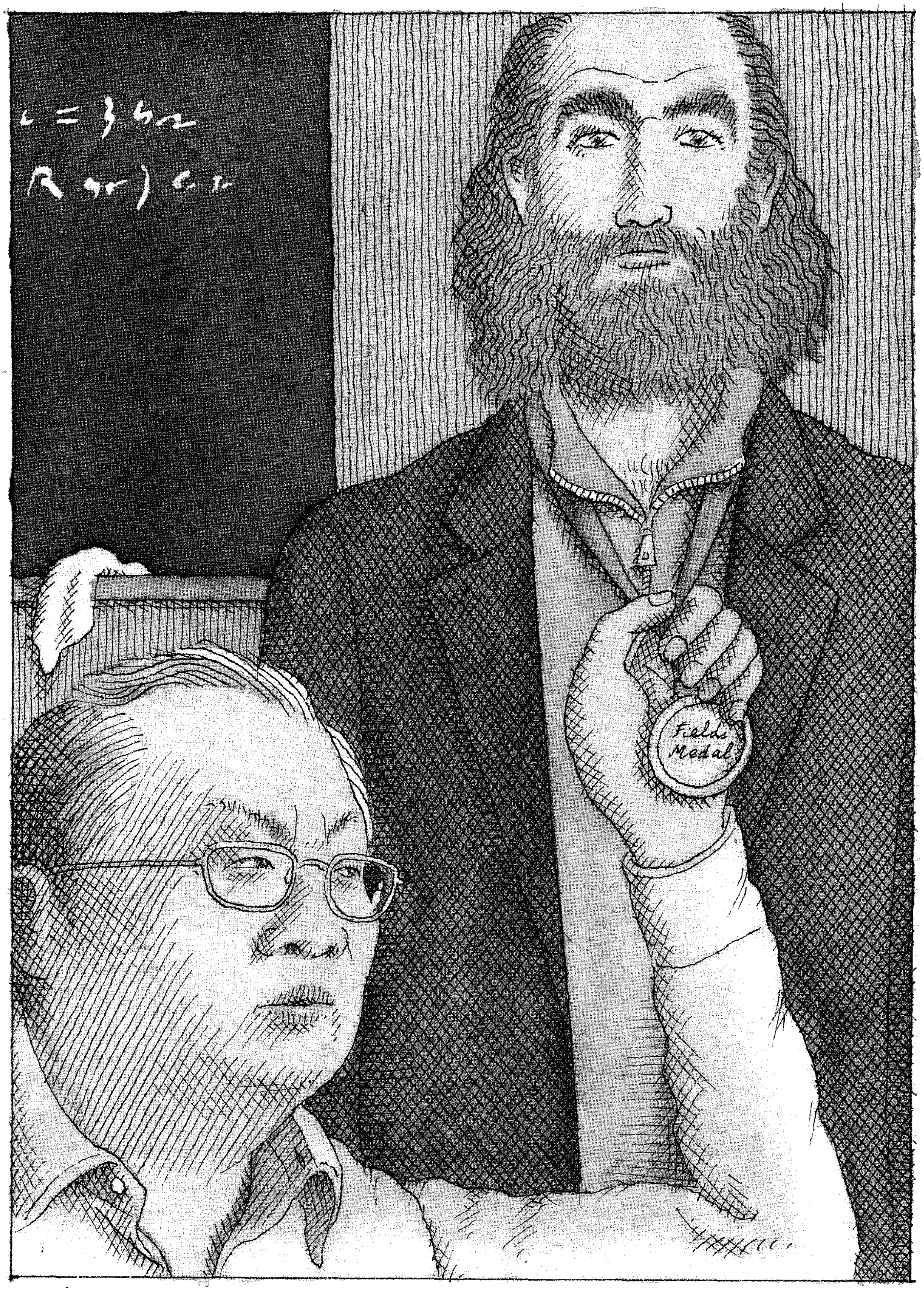
Grigory Perelman is indeed reclusive. He left his job as a researcher at the Steklov Institute of Mathematics, in St. Petersburg, last December; he has few friends; and he lives with his mother in an apartment on the outskirts of the city. Although he had never granted an interview before, he was cordial and frank when we visited him, in late June, shortly after Yau's conference in Beijing, taking us on a long walking tour of the city. "I'm looking for some friends, and they don't have to be mathematicians," he said. The week before the conference, Perelman had spent hours discussing the Poincaré conjecture with Sir John M. Ball, the fifty-eight-year-old president of the International Mathematical Union, the discipline's influential professional association. The meeting, which took place at a conference center in a stately mansion overlooking the Neva River, was highly unusual. At the end of May, a committee of nine prominent mathematicians had voted to award Perelman a Fields Medal for his work on the Poincaré, and Ball had gone to St. Petersburg to persuade him to accept the prize in a public ceremony at the I.M.U.'s quadrennial congress, in Madrid, on August 22nd.

The Fields Medal, like the Nobel Prize, grew, in part, out of a desire to elevate science above national animosities. German mathematicians were excluded from the first I.M.U. congress, in 1924, and, though the ban was lifted before the next one, the trauma it caused led, in 1936, to the establishment of the Fields, a prize intended to be "as purely international and impersonal as possible."

However, the Fields Medal, which is awarded every four years, to between two and four mathematicians, is supposed not only to reward past achievements but also to stimulate future research; for this reason, it is given only to mathematicians aged forty and younger. In recent decades, as the number of professional mathematicians has grown, the Fields Medal has become increasingly prestigious. Only forty-four medals have been awarded in nearly seventy years—including three for work closely related to the Poincaré conjecture—and no mathematician has ever refused the prize. Nevertheless, Perelman told Ball that he had no intention of accepting it. "I refuse," he said simply.

Over a period of eight months, beginning in November, 2002, Perelman posted a proof of the Poincaré on the Internet in three installments. Like a sonnet or an aria, a mathematical proof has a distinct form and set of conventions. It begins with axioms, or ac-

PIERRE LE-TAN


Fields Medal

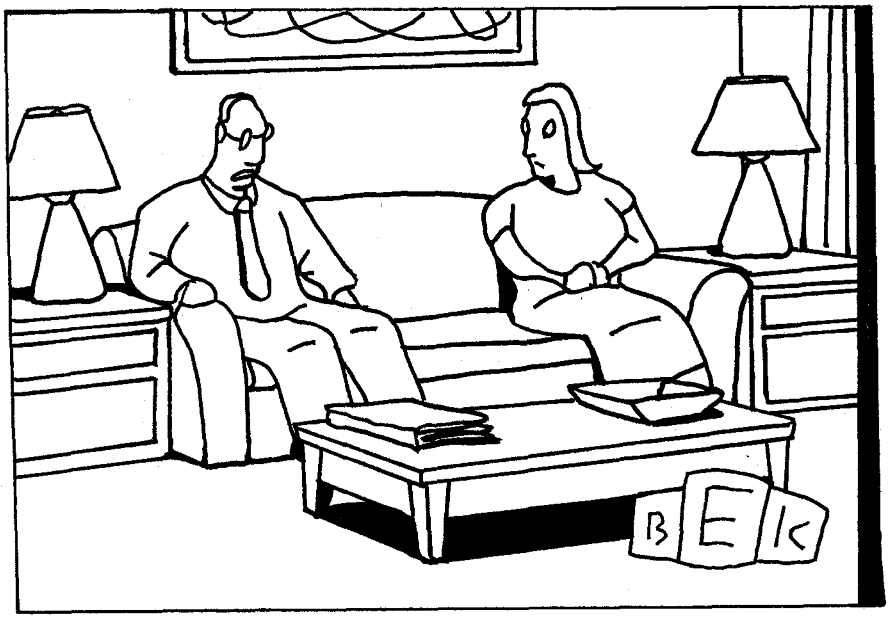
Grigory Perelman (right) says, *"If the proof is correct, then no other recognition is needed."* Shing-Tung Yau isn't so sure.

cepted truths, and employs a series of logical statements to arrive at a conclusion. If the logic is deemed to be watertight, then the result is a theorem. Unlike proof in law or science, which is based on evidence and therefore subject to qualification and revision, a proof of a theorem is definitive. Judgments about the accuracy of a proof are mediated by peer-reviewed journals; to insure fairness, reviewers are supposed to be carefully chosen by journal editors, and the identity of a scholar whose paper is under consideration is kept secret. Publication implies that a proof is complete, correct, and original.

By these standards, Perelman's proof was unorthodox. It was astonishingly brief for such an ambitious piece of work; logic sequences that could have been elaborated over many pages were often severely compressed. Moreover, the proof made no direct mention of the Poincaré and included many elegant results that were irrelevant to the central argument. But, four years later, at least two teams of experts had vetted the proof and had found no significant gaps or errors in it. A consensus was emerging in the math community: Perelman had solved the Poincaré. Even so, the proof's complexity—and Perelman's use of shorthand in making some of his most important claims—made it vulnerable to challenge. Few mathematicians had the expertise necessary to evaluate and defend it.

After giving a series of lectures on the proof in the United States in 2003, Perelman returned to St. Petersburg. Since then, although he had continued to answer queries about it by e-mail, he had had minimal contact with colleagues and, for reasons no one understood, had not tried to publish it. Still, there was little doubt that Perelman, who turned forty on June 13th, deserved a Fields Medal. As Ball planned the I.M.U.'s 2006 congress, he began to conceive of it as a historic event. More than three thousand mathematicians would be attending, and King Juan Carlos of Spain had agreed to preside over the awards ceremony. The I.M.U.'s newsletter predicted that the congress would be remembered as "the occasion when this conjecture became a theorem." Ball, determined to make sure that Perelman would be there, decided to go to St. Petersburg.

Ball wanted to keep his visit a secret—the names of Fields Medal recipients are announced officially at the awards ceremony—and the conference center where he met with Perelman was deserted. For ten hours over two days, he tried to persuade Perelman to agree to accept the prize. Perelman, a slender, balding man with a curly beard, bushy eyebrows, and blue-green eyes, listened politely. He had not spoken English for three years, but he fluently parried Ball's entreaties, at one point taking Ball on a long walk—one of Perelman's favorite activities. As he summed up the conversation two weeks later: "He proposed to me three alternatives: accept and come; accept and don't come, and we will send you the medal later; third, I don't accept the prize. From the very beginning, I told him I have chosen the third one." The Fields Medal held no interest for him, Perelman explained. "It was completely irrelevant for me," he said. "Everybody understood that if the proof is correct then no other recognition is needed."



"Should we halfheartedly try to relate?"

Proofs of the Poincaré have been announced nearly every year since the conjecture was formulated, by Henri Poincaré, more than a hundred years ago. Poincaré was a cousin of Raymond Poincaré, the President of France during the First World War, and one of the most creative mathematicians of the nineteenth century. Slight, myopic, and notoriously absent-minded, he conceived his famous problem in 1904, eight years before he died, and tucked it as an offhand question into the end of a sixty-five-page paper.

Poincaré didn't make much progress on proving the conjecture. "*Cette question nous entraînerait trop loin*" ("This question would take us too far"), he wrote. He was a founder of topology, also known as "rubber-sheet geometry," for its focus on the intrinsic properties of spaces. From a topologist's perspective, there is no difference between a bagel and a coffee cup with a handle. Each has a single hole and can be manipulated to resemble the other without being torn or cut. Poincaré used the term "manifold" to describe such an abstract topological space. The simplest possible two-dimensional manifold is the surface of a soccer ball, which, to a topologist, is a sphere—even when it is stomped on, stretched, or crumpled. The proof that an object is a so-called two-sphere, since it can take on any number of shapes, is that it is "simply connected," meaning that no holes puncture it. Unlike a soccer ball, a bagel is not a true sphere. If you tie a slipknot around a soccer ball, you can easily pull the slipknot closed by sliding it along the surface of the ball. But if you tie a slipknot around a bagel through the hole in its middle you cannot pull the slipknot closed without tearing the bagel.

Two-dimensional manifolds were well understood by the mid-nineteenth century. But it remained unclear whether what was true for two dimensions was also true for three. Poincaré proposed that all closed, simply connected, three-dimensional manifolds—those which lack holes and are of finite extent—were spheres. The conjecture was potentially important for scientists studying the largest known three-dimensional manifold: the universe. Proving it mathematically, however, was far from easy. Most attempts were merely embarrassing, but some led to important mathematical discoveries, including proofs of Dehn's Lemma, the Sphere Theorem, and the Loop Theorem, which are now fundamental concepts in topology.

By the nineteen-sixties, topology had become one of the most productive areas of mathematics, and young topologists were launching regular attacks on the Poincaré. To the astonishment of most mathematicians, it turned out that manifolds of the fourth, fifth, and higher dimensions were more tractable than those of the third dimension. By 1982, Poincaré's conjecture had been proved in all dimensions except the third. In 2000, the Clay Mathematics Institute, a private foundation that promotes mathematical research, named the Poincaré one of the seven most important outstanding problems in mathematics and offered a million dollars to anyone who could prove it.

"My whole life as a mathematician has been dominated by the Poincaré conjecture," John Morgan, the head of the mathematics department at Columbia University, said. "I never thought I'd see a solution. I thought nobody could touch it."

Grigory Perelman did not plan to become a mathematician. "There was never a decision point," he said when we met. We were outside the apartment building where he lives, in Kupchino, a neighborhood of drab high-rises. Perelman's father, who was an electrical engineer, encouraged his interest in math. "He gave me logical and other math problems to think about," Perelman said. "He got a lot of books for me to read. He taught me how to play chess. He was proud of me." Among the books his father gave him was a copy of "Physics for Entertainment," which had been a best-seller in the Soviet Union in the nineteen-thirties. In the foreword, the book's author describes the contents as "conundrums, brain-teasers, entertaining anecdotes, and unexpected comparisons," adding, "I have quoted extensively from Jules Verne, H. G. Wells, Mark Twain and other writers, because, besides providing entertainment, the fantastic experiments these writers describe may well serve as instructive illustrations at physics classes." The book's topics included how to jump from a moving car, and why, "according to the law of buoyancy, we would never drown in the Dead Sea."

The notion that Russian society considered worthwhile what Perelman did for pleasure came as a surprise. By the time he was fourteen, he was the star performer of a local math club. In 1982, the year that Shing-Tung Yau won a Fields Medal, Perelman earned a perfect score and the gold medal at the International Mathematical Olympiad, in Budapest. He was friendly with his teammates but not close—"I had no close friends," he said. He was one of two or three Jews in his grade, and he had a passion for opera, which also set him apart from his peers. His mother, a math teacher at a technical college, played the violin and began taking him to the opera when he was six. By the time Perelman was fifteen, he was spending his pocket money on records. He was thrilled to own a recording of a famous 1946 performance of "La Traviata," featuring Licia Albanese as Violetta. "Her voice was very good," he said.

At Leningrad University, which Perelman entered in 1982, at the age of sixteen, he took advanced classes in geometry and solved a problem posed by Yuri Burago, a mathematician at the Steklov Institute, who later became his Ph.D. adviser. "There are a lot of students of high ability who speak before thinking," Burago said. "Grisha was different. He thought deeply. His answers were always correct. He always checked very, very carefully." Burago added, "He was not fast. Speed means nothing. Math doesn't depend on speed. It is about *deep*."

At the Steklov in the early nineties, Perelman became an expert on the geometry of Riemannian and Alexandrov spaces—extensions of traditional Euclidean geometry—and began to publish articles in the leading Russian and American mathematics journals. In 1992, Perelman was invited to spend a semester each at New York University and Stony Brook University. By the time he left for the United States, that fall, the Russian economy had collapsed. Dan Stroock, a mathematician at M.I.T., recalls smuggling wads of dollars into the country to deliver to a retired mathematician at the Steklov, who, like many of his colleagues, had become destitute.

Perelman was pleased to be in the United States, the capital of the international mathematics community. He wore the same brown corduroy jacket every day and told friends at N.Y.U. that he lived on a diet of bread, cheese, and milk. He liked to walk to Brooklyn, where he had relatives and could buy traditional Russian brown bread. Some of his colleagues were taken aback by his fingernails, which were several inches long. "If they grow, why wouldn't I let them grow?" he would say when someone asked why he didn't cut them. Once a week, he and a young Chinese mathematician named Gang Tian drove to Princeton, to attend a seminar at the Institute for Advanced Study.

For several decades, the institute and nearby Princeton University had been centers of topological research. In the late seventies, William Thurston, a Princeton mathematician who liked to test out his ideas using scissors and construction paper, proposed a taxonomy for classifying manifolds of three dimensions. He argued that, while the manifolds could be made to take on many different shapes, they nonetheless had a "preferred" geometry, just as a piece of silk draped over a dressmaker's mannequin takes on the mannequin's form.

Thurston proposed that every three-dimensional manifold could be broken down into one or more of eight types of component, including a spherical type. Thurston's theory—which became known as the geometrization conjecture—describes all possible three-dimensional manifolds and is thus a powerful generalization of the Poincaré. If it was confirmed, then Poincaré's conjecture would be, too. Proving Thurston and

Poincaré "definitely swings open doors," Barry Mazur, a mathematician at Harvard, said. The implications of the conjectures for other disciplines may not be apparent for years, but for mathematicians the problems are fundamental. "This is a kind of twentieth-century Pythagorean theorem," Mazur added. "It changes the landscape."

In 1982, Thurston won a Fields Medal for his contributions to topology. That year, Richard Hamilton, a mathematician at Cornell, published a paper on an equation called the Ricci flow, which he suspected could be relevant for solving Thurston's conjecture and thus the Poincaré. Like a heat equation, which describes how heat distributes itself evenly through a substance—flowing from hotter to cooler parts of a metal sheet, for example—to create a more uniform temperature, the Ricci flow, by smoothing out irregularities, gives manifolds a more uniform geometry.

Hamilton, the son of a Cincinnati doctor, defied the math profession's nerdy stereotype. Brash and irreverent, he rode horses, windsurfed, and had a succession of girlfriends. He treated math as merely one of life's pleasures. At forty-nine, he was considered a brilliant lecturer, but he had published relatively little beyond a series of seminal articles on the Ricci flow, and he had few graduate students. Perelman had read Hamilton's papers and went to hear him give a talk at the Institute for Advanced Study. Afterward, Perelman shyly spoke to him.

"I really wanted to ask him something," Perelman recalled. "He was smiling, and he was quite patient. He actually told me a couple of things that he published a few years later. He did not hesitate to tell me. Hamilton's openness and generosity—it really attracted me. I can't say that most mathematicians act like that.

"I was working on different things, though occasionally I would think about the Ricci flow," Perelman added. "You didn't have to be a great mathematician to see that this would be useful for geometrization. I felt I didn't know very much. I kept asking questions."

Shing-Tung Yau was also asking Hamilton questions about the Ricci flow. Yau and Hamilton had met in the seventies, and had become close, despite considerable differences in temperament and background. A mathematician at the University of California at San Diego who knows both men called them "the mathematical loves of each other's lives."

Yau's family moved to Hong Kong from mainland China in 1949, when he was five months old, along with hundreds of thousands of other refugees fleeing Mao's armies. The previous year, his father, a relief worker for the United Nations, had lost most of the family's savings in a series of failed ventures. In Hong Kong, to support his wife and eight children, he tutored college students in classical Chinese literature and philosophy.

When Yau was fourteen, his father died of kidney cancer, leaving his mother dependent on handouts from Christian missionaries and whatever small sums she earned from selling handicrafts. Until then, Yau had been an indifferent student. But he began to devote himself to schoolwork, tutoring other students in math to make money. "Part of the thing that drives Yau is that he sees his own life as being his father's revenge," said Dan Stroock, the M.I.T. mathematician, who has known Yau for twenty years. "Yau's father was like the Talmudist whose children are starving."

Yau studied math at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, where he attracted the attention of Shiing-Shen Chern, the preëminent Chinese mathematician, who helped him win a scholarship to the University of California at Berkeley. Chern was the author of a famous theorem combining topology and geometry. He spent most of his career in the United States, at Berkeley. He made frequent visits to Hong Kong, Taiwan, and, later, China, where he was a revered symbol of Chinese intellectual achievement, to promote the study of math and science.

In 1969, Yau started graduate school at Berkeley, enrolling in seven graduate courses each term and auditing several others. He sent half of his scholarship money back to his mother in China and impressed his professors with his tenacity. He was obliged to share credit for his first major result when he learned that two other mathematicians were working on the same problem. In 1976, he proved a twenty-year-old conjecture pertaining to a type of manifold that is now crucial to string theory. A French mathematician had formulated a proof of the problem, which is known as Calabi's conjecture, but Yau's, because it was more general, was more powerful. (Physicists now refer to Calabi-Yau manifolds.) "He was not so much thinking up some original way of looking at a subject but solving extremely hard technical problems that at the time only he could solve, by sheer intellect and force of will," Phillip Griffiths, a geometer and a former director of the Institute for Advanced Study, said.

In 1980, when Yau was thirty, he became one of the youngest mathematicians ever to be appointed to the permanent faculty of the Institute for Advanced Study, and he began to attract talented students. He won a Fields Medal two years later, the first Chinese ever to do so. By this time, Chern was seventy years old and on the verge of retirement. According to a relative of Chern's, "Yau decided that he was going to be the next famous Chinese mathematician and that it was time for Chern to step down."

Harvard had been trying to recruit Yau, and when, in 1983, it was about to make him a second offer Phillip Griffiths told the dean of faculty a version of a story from "The Romance of the Three Kingdoms," a Chinese classic. In the third century A.D., a Chinese warlord dreamed of creating an empire, but the most brilliant general in China was working for a rival. Three times, the warlord went to his enemy's kingdom to seek out the general. Impressed, the general agreed to join him, and together they succeeded in founding a dynasty. Taking the hint, the dean flew to Philadelphia, where Yau lived at the time, to make him an offer. Even so, Yau turned down the job. Finally, in 1987, he agreed to go to Harvard.

Yau's entrepreneurial drive extended to collaborations with colleagues and students, and, in addition to conducting his own research, he began organizing seminars. He frequently allied himself with brilliantly inventive mathematicians, including Richard Schoen and William Meeks. But Yau was especially impressed by Hamilton, as much for his swagger as for his imagination. "I can have fun with Hamilton," Yau told us during the string-theory conference in Beijing. "I can go swimming with him. I go out with him and his girlfriends and all that." Yau was convinced that Hamilton could use the Ricci-flow equation to solve the Poincaré and Thurston conjectures, and he urged him to focus on the problems. "Meeting Yau changed his mathematical life," a friend of both mathematicians said of Hamilton. "This was the first time he had been on to something extremely big. Talking to Yau gave him courage and direction."

"I'm a local craftsperson—I make money."

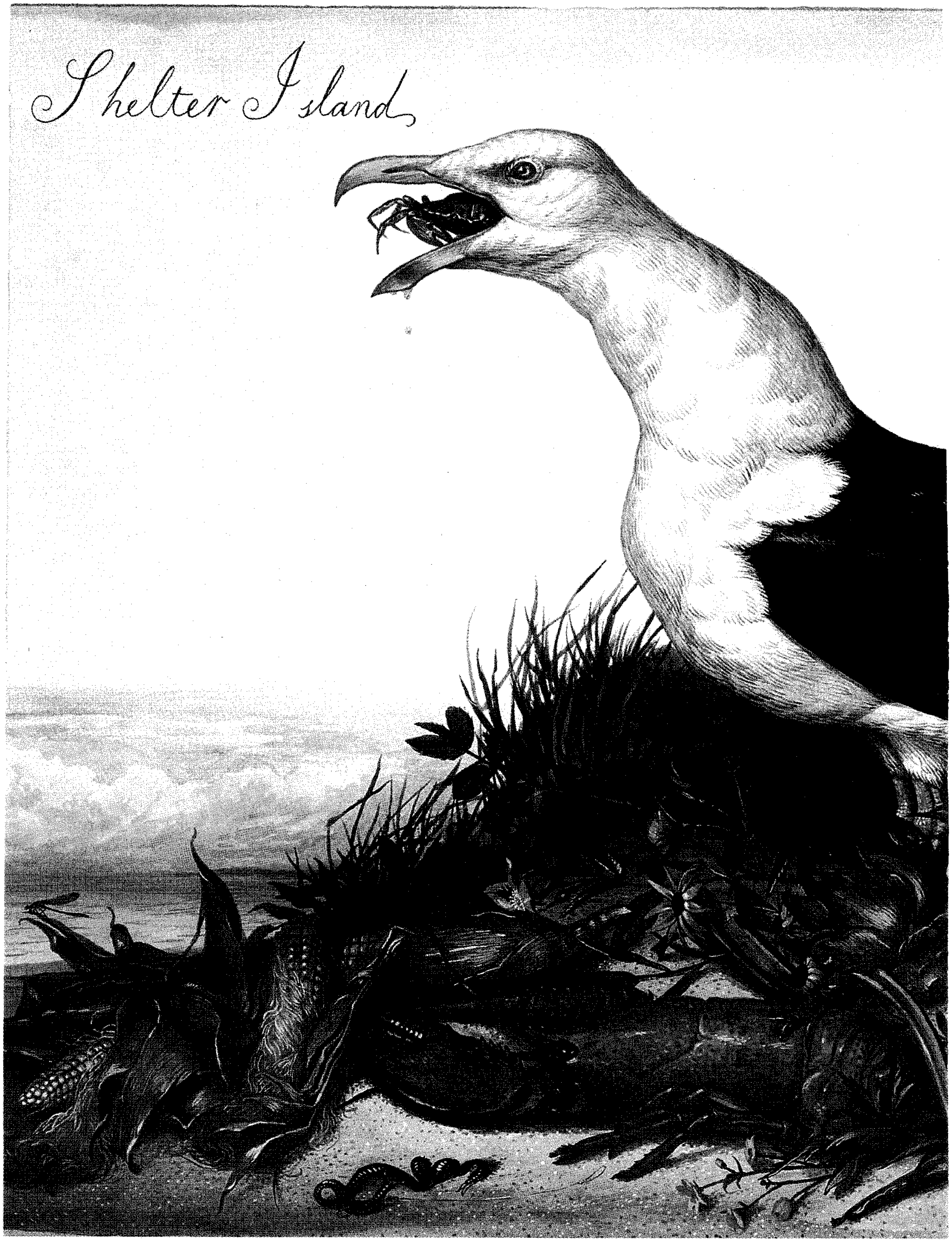
Yau believed that if he could help solve the Poincaré it would be a victory not just for him but also for China. In the mid-nineties, Yau and several other Chinese scholars began meeting with President Jiang Zemin to discuss how to rebuild the country's scientific institutions, which had been largely destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. Chinese universities were in dire condition. According to Steve Smale, who won a Fields for proving the Poincaré in higher dimensions, and who, after retiring from Berkeley, taught in Hong Kong, Peking University had "halls filled with the smell of urine, one common room, one office for all the assistant professors," and paid its faculty wretchedly low salaries. Yau persuaded a Hong Kong real-estate mogul to help finance a mathematics institute at the Chinese Academy of Sciences, in Beijing, and to endow a Fields-style medal for Chinese mathematicians under the age of forty-five. On his trips to China, Yau touted Hamilton and their joint work on the Ricci flow and the Poincaré as a model for young Chinese mathematicians. As he put it in Beijing, "They always say that the whole country should learn from Mao or some big heroes. So I made a joke to them, but I was half serious. I said the whole country should learn from Hamilton."

• •

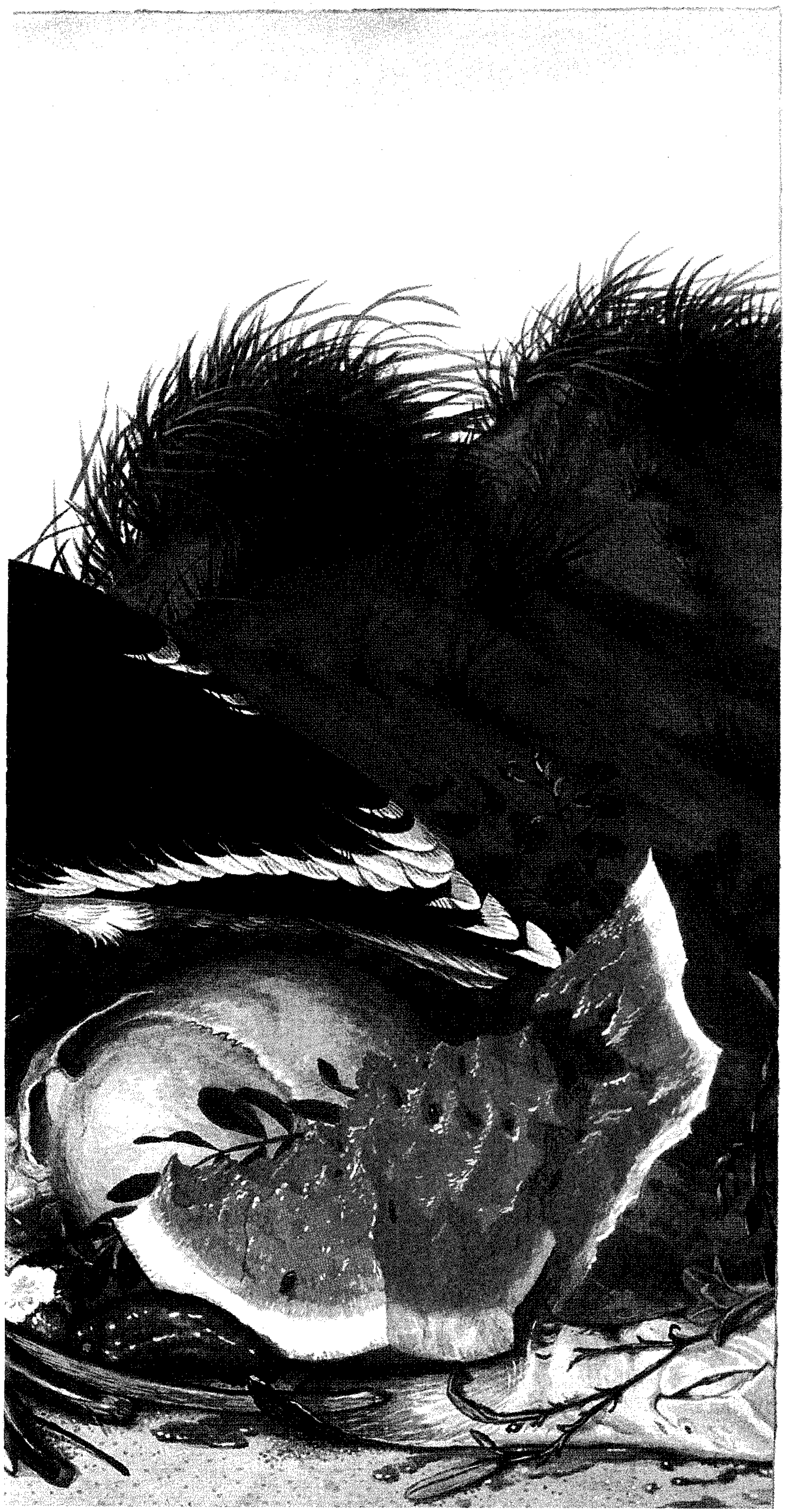
Grigory Perelman was learning from Hamilton already. In 1993, he began a two-year fellowship at Berkeley. While he was there, Hamilton gave several talks on campus, and in one he mentioned that he was working on the Poincaré. Hamilton's Ricci-flow strategy was extremely technical and tricky to execute. After one of his talks at Berkeley, he told Perelman about his biggest obstacle. As a space is smoothed under the Ricci flow, some regions deform into what mathematicians refer to as "singularities." Some regions, called "necks," become attenuated areas of infinite density. More troubling to Hamilton was a kind of singularity he called the "cigar." If cigars formed, Hamilton worried, it might be impossible to achieve uniform geometry. Perelman realized that a paper he had written on Alexandrov spaces might help Hamilton prove Thurston's conjecture—and the Poincaré—once Hamilton solved the cigar problem. "At some point, I asked Hamilton if he knew a certain collapsing result that I had proved but not published—which turned out to be very useful," Perelman said. "Later, I realized that he didn't understand what I was talking about." Dan Stroock, of M.I.T., said, "Perelman may have learned stuff from Yau and Hamilton, but, at the time, they were not learning from him."

By the end of his first year at Berkeley, Perelman had written several strikingly original papers. He was asked to give a lecture at the 1994 I.M.U. congress, in Zurich, and invited to apply for jobs at Stanford, Princeton, the Institute for Advanced Study, and the

Shelter Island



SKETCHBOOK BY WALTON FORD *A full third of Shelter Island, at the eastern end of Long Island, is given over to the Mashomack*



Preserve, which has protected wetlands and ten miles of natural coast.

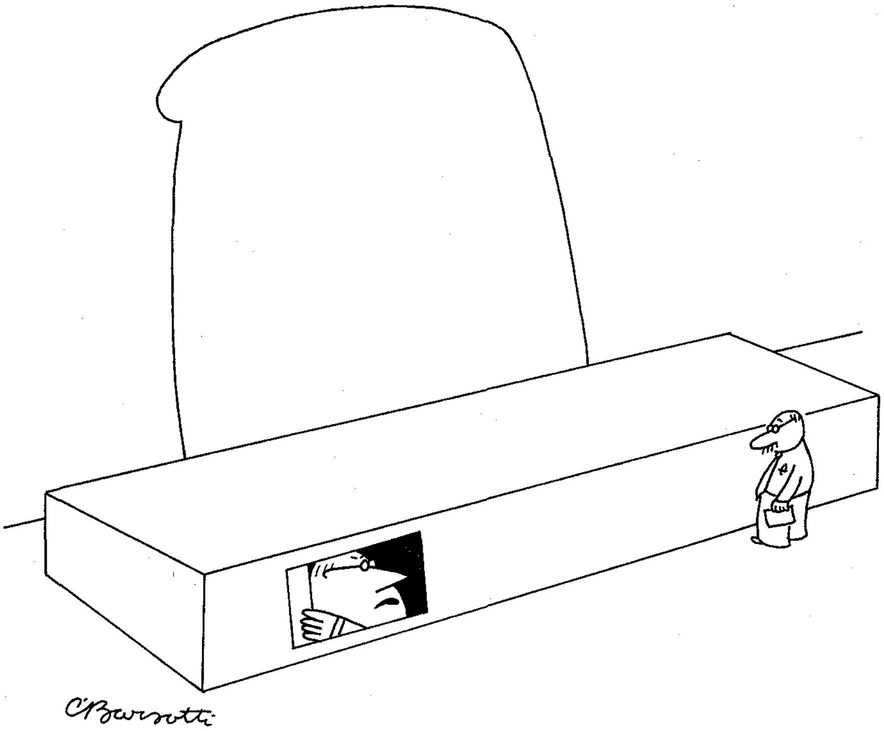
PAUL KASMIN GALLERY, NYC.

University of Tel Aviv. Like Yau, Perelman was a formidable problem solver. Instead of spending years constructing an intricate theoretical framework, or defining new areas of research, he focussed on obtaining particular results. According to Mikhail Gromov, a renowned Russian geometer who has collaborated with Perelman, he had been trying to overcome a technical difficulty relating to Alexandrov spaces and had apparently been stumped. "He couldn't do it," Gromov said. "It was hopeless."

Perelman told us that he liked to work on several problems at once. At Berkeley, however, he found himself returning again and again to Hamilton's Ricci-flow equation and the problem that Hamilton thought he could solve with it. Some of Perelman's friends noticed that he was becoming more and more ascetic. Visitors from St. Petersburg who stayed in his apartment were struck by how sparsely furnished it was. Others worried that he seemed to want to reduce life to a set of rigid axioms. When a member of a hiring committee at Stanford asked him for a C.V. to include with requests for letters of recommendation, Perelman balked. "If they know my work, they don't need my C.V.," he said. "If they need my C.V., they don't know my work."

Ultimately, he received several job offers. But he declined them all, and in the summer of 1995 returned to St. Petersburg, to his old job at the Steklov Institute, where he was paid less than a hundred dollars a month. (He told a friend that he had saved enough money in the United States to live on for the rest of his life.) His father had moved to Israel two years earlier, and his younger sister was planning to join him there after she finished college. His mother, however, had decided to remain in St. Petersburg, and Perelman moved in with her. "I realize that in Russia I work better," he told colleagues at the Steklov.

At twenty-nine, Perelman was firmly established as a mathematician and yet largely unburdened by professional responsibilities. He was free to pursue whatever problems he wanted to, and he knew that his work, should he choose to publish it, would be



"Over here, Billingsley."

shown serious consideration. Yakov Eliashberg, a mathematician at Stanford who knew Perelman at Berkeley, thinks that Perelman returned to Russia in order to work on the Poincaré. "Why not?" Perelman said when we asked whether Eliashberg's hunch was correct.

The Internet made it possible for Perelman to work alone while continuing to tap a common pool of knowledge. Perelman searched Hamilton's papers for clues to his thinking and gave several seminars on his work. "He didn't need any help," Gromov said. "He likes to be alone. He reminds me of Newton—this obsession with an idea, working by yourself, the disregard for other people's opinion. Newton was more obnoxious. Perelman is nicer, but very obsessed."

In 1995, Hamilton published a paper in which he discussed a few of his ideas for completing a proof of the Poincaré. Reading the paper, Perelman realized that Hamilton had made no progress on overcoming his obstacles—the necks and the cigars. "I hadn't seen any evidence of progress after early 1992," Perelman told us. "Maybe he got stuck even earlier." However, Perelman thought he saw a way around the impasse. In 1996, he wrote Hamilton a long letter outlining his notion, in the hope of collaborating. "He did not answer," Perelman said. "So I decided to work alone."

Yau had no idea that Hamilton's work on the Poincaré had stalled. He was increasingly anxious about his own standing in the mathematics profession, particularly in China, where, he worried, a younger scholar could try to supplant him as Chern's heir. More than a decade had passed since Yau had proved his last major result, though he continued to publish prolifically. "Yau wants to be the king of geometry," Michael Anderson, a geometer at Stony Brook, said. "He believes that everything should issue from him, that he should have oversight. He doesn't like people encroaching on his territory." Determined to retain control over his field, Yau pushed his students to tackle big problems. At Harvard, he ran a notoriously tough seminar on differential geometry, which met for three hours at a time three times a week. Each student was assigned a recently published proof and asked to reconstruct it, fixing any errors and filling in gaps. Yau believed that a mathematician has an obligation to be explicit, and impressed on his students the importance of step-by-step rigor.

There are two ways to get credit for an original contribution in mathematics. The first is to produce an original proof. The second is to identify a significant gap in someone else's proof and supply the missing chunk. However, only true mathematical gaps—missing or mistaken arguments—can be the basis for a claim of originality. Filling in gaps in exposition—shortcuts and abbreviations used to make a proof more efficient—does not count. When, in 1993, Andrew Wiles revealed that a gap had been found in his proof of Fermat's last theorem, the problem became fair game for anyone, until, the following year, Wiles fixed the error. Most mathematicians would agree that, by contrast, if a proof's implicit steps can be made explicit by an expert, then the gap is merely one of exposition, and the proof should be considered complete and correct.

Occasionally, the difference between a mathematical gap and a gap in exposition can be hard to discern. On at least one occasion, Yau and his students have seemed to confuse the two, making claims of originality that other mathematicians believe are unwarranted. In 1996, a young geometer at Berkeley named Alexander Givental had proved a mathematical conjecture about mirror symmetry, a concept that is fundamental to string theory. Though other mathematicians found Givental's proof hard to follow, they were optimistic that he had solved the problem. As one geometer put it, "Nobody at the time said it was incomplete and incorrect."

In the fall of 1997, Kefeng Liu, a former student of Yau's who taught at Stanford, gave a talk at Harvard on mirror symmetry. According to two geometers in the audience, Liu proceeded to present a proof strikingly similar to Givental's, describing it as a paper that he had co-authored with Yau and another student of Yau's. "Liu mentioned Givental but only as one of a long list of people who had contributed to the field," one of the geometers said. (Liu maintains that his proof was significantly different from Givental's.)

Around the same time, Givental received an e-mail signed by Yau and his collaborators, explaining that they had found his arguments impossible to follow and his notation baffling, and had come up with a proof of their own. They praised Givental for his "brilliant idea" and wrote, "In the final version of our paper your important contribution will be acknowledged."

A few weeks later, the paper, "Mirror Principle I," appeared in the *Asian Journal of Mathematics*, which is coedited by Yau. In it, Yau and his coauthors describe their result as "the first complete proof" of the mirror conjecture. They mention Givental's work only in passing. "Unfortunately," they write, his proof, "which has been read by many prominent experts, is incomplete." However, they did not identify a specific mathematical gap.

Givental was taken aback. "I wanted to know what their objection was," he told us. "Not to expose them or defend myself." In March, 1998, he published a paper that included a three-page footnote in which he pointed out a number of similarities between Yau's proof and his own. Several months later, a young mathematician at the University of Chicago who was asked by senior colleagues to investigate the dispute concluded that Givental's proof was complete. Yau says that he had been working on the proof for years with his students and that they achieved their result independently of Givental. "We had our own ideas, and we wrote them up," he says.

Around this time, Yau had his first serious conflict with Chern and the Chinese mathematical establishment. For years, Chern had been hoping to bring the I.M.U.'s congress to Beijing. According to several mathematicians who were active in the I.M.U. at the time, Yau made an eleventh-hour effort to have the congress take place in Hong Kong instead. But he failed to persuade a sufficient number of colleagues to go along with his proposal, and the I.M.U. ultimately decided to hold the 2002 congress in Beijing. (Yau denies that he tried to bring the congress to Hong Kong.) Among the delegates the I.M.U. appointed to a group that would be choosing speakers for the congress was Yau's most successful student, Gang Tian, who had been at N.Y.U. with Perelman and was now a professor at M.I.T. The host committee in Beijing also asked Tian to give a plenary address.

Yau was caught by surprise. In March, 2000, he had published a survey of recent research in his field studded with glowing references to Tian and to their joint projects. He retaliated by organizing his first conference on string theory, which opened in Beijing a few days before the math congress began, in late August, 2002. He persuaded Stephen Hawking and several Nobel laureates to attend, and for days the Chinese newspapers were full of pictures of famous scientists. Yau even managed to arrange for his group to have an audience with Jiang Zemin. A mathematician who helped organize the math congress recalls that along the highway between Beijing and the airport there were "billboards with pictures of Stephen Hawking plastered everywhere."

That summer, Yau wasn't thinking much about the Poincaré. He had confidence in Hamilton, despite his slow pace. "Hamilton is a very good friend," Yau told us in Beijing. "He is more than a friend. He is a hero. He is so original. We were working to finish our proof. Hamilton worked on it for twenty-five years. You work, you get tired. He probably got a little tired—and you want to take a rest."

Then, on November 12, 2002, Yau received an e-mail message from a Russian mathematician whose name didn't immediately register. "May I bring to your attention my paper," the e-mail said.

On November 11th, Perelman had posted a thirty-nine-page paper entitled "The Entropy Formula for the Ricci Flow and Its Geometric Applications," on arXiv.org, a Web site used by mathematicians to post preprints—articles awaiting publication in refereed journals. He then e-mailed an abstract of his paper to a dozen mathematicians in the United States—including Hamilton, Tian, and Yau—none of whom had heard from him for years. In the abstract, he explained that he had written "a sketch of an eclectic proof" of the geometrization conjecture.

Perelman had not mentioned the proof or shown it to anyone. "I didn't have any friends with whom I could

INFORMATION
YOU ARE A TOURIST
Gahan Wilson

discuss this," he said in St. Petersburg. "I didn't want to discuss my work with someone I didn't trust." Andrew Wiles had also kept the fact that he was working on Fermat's last theorem a secret, but he had had a colleague vet the proof before making it public. Perelman, by casually posting a proof on the Internet of one of the most famous problems in mathematics, was not just flouting academic convention but taking a considerable risk. If the proof was flawed, he would be publicly humiliated, and there would be no way to prevent another mathematician from fixing any errors and claiming victory. But Perelman said he was not particularly concerned. "My reasoning was: if I made an error and someone used my work to construct a correct proof I would be pleased," he said. "I never set out to be the sole solver of the Poincaré."

Gang Tian was in his office at M.I.T. when he received Perelman's e-mail. He and Perelman had been friendly in 1992, when they were both at N.Y.U. and had attended the same weekly math seminar in Princeton. "I immediately realized its importance," Tian said of Perelman's paper. Tian began to read the paper and discuss it with colleagues, who were equally enthusiastic.

On November 19th, Vitali Kapovitch, a geometer, sent Perelman an e-mail:

> Hi Grisha, Sorry to bother you but a lot of people are asking me about your preprint "The entropy formula for the Ricci . . ." Do I understand it correctly that while you cannot yet do all the steps in the Hamilton program you can do enough so that using some collapsing results you can prove geometrization? Vitali.

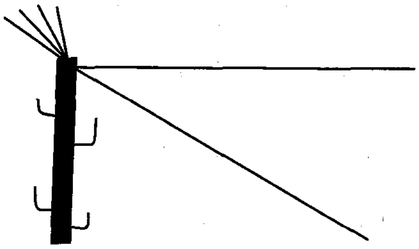
Perelman's response, the next day, was terse: "That's correct. Grisha."

In fact, what Perelman had posted on the Internet was only the first installment of his proof. But it was sufficient for mathematicians to see that he had figured out how to solve the Poincaré. Barry Mazur, the Harvard mathematician, uses the image of a dented fender to describe Perelman's achievement: "Suppose your car has a dented fender and you call a mechanic to ask how to smooth it out. The mechanic would have a hard time telling you what to do over the phone. You would have to bring the car into the garage for him to examine. Then he could tell you where to give it a few knocks. What Hamilton introduced and Perelman completed is a procedure that is independent of the particularities of the blemish. If you apply the Ricci flow to a 3-D space, it will begin to undent it and smooth it out. The mechanic would not need to even see the car—just apply the equation." Perelman proved that the "cigars" that had troubled Hamilton could not actually occur, and he showed that the "neck" problem could be solved by performing an intricate sequence of mathematical surgeries: cutting out singularities and patching up the raw edges. "Now we have a procedure to smooth things and, at crucial points, control the breaks," Mazur said.

Tian wrote to Perelman, asking him to lecture on his paper at M.I.T. Colleagues at Princeton and Stony Brook extended similar invitations. Perelman accepted them all and was booked for a month of lectures beginning in April, 2003. "Why not?" he told us with a shrug. Speaking of mathematicians generally, Fedor Nazarov, a mathematician at Michigan State University, said, "After you've solved a problem, you have a great urge to talk about it."

Hamilton and Yau were stunned by Perelman's announcement. "We felt that nobody else would be able to discover the solution," Yau told us in Beijing. "But then, in 2002, Perelman said that he published something. He basically did a shortcut without doing all the detailed estimates that we did." Moreover, Yau complained, Perelman's proof "was written in such a messy way that we didn't understand."

Perelman's April lecture tour was treated by mathematicians and by the press as a major event. Among the audience at his talk at Princeton were John Ball, Andrew Wiles, John Forbes Nash, Jr., who had proved the Riemannian embedding theorem, and John Conway, the inventor of the cellular automaton game Life. To the astonishment of many in the audience, Perelman said nothing about the Poincaré. "Here is a guy who proved a world-famous theorem and didn't even mention it," Frank Quinn, a mathematician at Virginia Tech, said. "He stated some key points and special properties, and then answered questions. He was establishing credibility. If he had beaten his chest and said, 'I solved it,' he would have got a huge amount of resistance." He added, "People were expecting a strange sight. Perelman was much more normal than they expected."



To Perelman's disappointment, Hamilton did not attend that lecture or the next ones, at Stony Brook. "I'm a disciple of Hamilton's, though I haven't received his authorization," Perelman told us. But John Morgan, at Columbia, where Hamilton now taught, was in the audience at Stony Brook, and after a lecture he invited Perelman to speak at Columbia. Perelman, hoping to see Hamilton, agreed. The lecture took place on a Saturday morning. Hamilton showed up late and asked no questions during either the long discussion session that followed the talk or the lunch after that. "I had the impression he had read only the first part of my paper," Perelman said.

In the April 18, 2003, issue of *Science*, Yau was featured in an article about Perelman's proof: "Many experts, although not all, seem convinced that Perelman has stubbed out the cigars and tamed the narrow necks. But they are less confident that he can control the number of surgeries. That could prove a fatal flaw, Yau warns, noting that many other attempted proofs of the Poincaré conjecture have stumbled over similar missing steps." Proofs should be treated with skepticism until mathematicians have had a chance to review them thoroughly, Yau told us. Until then, he said, "it's not math—it's religion."

By mid-July, Perelman had posted the final two installments of his proof on the Internet, and mathematicians had begun the work of formal explication, painstakingly retracing his steps. In the United States, at least two teams of experts had assigned themselves this task: Gang Tian (Yau's rival) and John Morgan; and a pair of researchers at the University of Michigan. Both projects were supported by the Clay Institute, which planned to publish Tian and Morgan's work as a book. The book, in addition to providing other mathematicians with a guide to Perelman's logic, would allow him to be considered for the Clay Institute's million-dollar prize for solving the Poincaré. (To be eligible, a proof must be published in a peer-reviewed venue and withstand two years of scrutiny by the mathematical community.)

On September 10, 2004, more than a year after Perelman returned to St. Petersburg, he received a long e-mail from Tian, who said that he had just attended a two-week workshop at Princeton devoted to Perelman's proof. "I think that we have understood the whole paper," Tian wrote. "It is all right."

Perelman did not write back. As he explained to us, "I didn't worry too much myself. This was a famous problem. Some people needed time to get accustomed to the fact that this is no longer a conjecture. I personally decided for myself that it was right for me to stay away from verification and not to participate in all these meetings. It is important for me that I don't influence this process."

In July of that year, the National Science Foundation had given nearly a million dollars in grants to Yau, Hamilton, and several students of Yau's to study and apply Perelman's "breakthrough." An entire branch of mathematics had grown up around efforts to solve the Poincaré, and now that branch appeared at risk of becoming obsolete. Michael Freedman, who won a Fields for proving the Poincaré conjecture for the fourth dimension, told the *Times* that Perelman's proof was a "small sorrow for this particular branch of topology." Yuri Burago said, "It kills the field. After this is done, many mathematicians will move to other branches of mathematics."

Five months later, Chern died, and Yau's efforts to insure that he—not Tian—was recognized as his successor turned vicious. "It's all about their primacy in China and their leadership among the expatriate Chinese," Joseph Kohn, a former chairman of the Princeton mathematics department, said. "Yau's not jealous of Tian's mathematics, but he's jealous of his power back in China."

Though Yau had not spent more than a few months at a time on mainland China since he was an infant, he was convinced that his status as the only Chinese Fields Medal winner should make him Chern's successor. In a speech he gave at Zhejiang University, in Hangzhou, during the summer of 2004, Yau reminded his listeners of his Chinese roots. "When I stepped out from the airplane, I touched the soil of Beijing and felt great joy to be in my mother country," he said. "I am proud to say that when I was awarded the Fields Medal in mathematics, I held no passport of any country and should certainly be considered Chinese."

The following summer, Yau returned to China and, in a series of interviews with Chinese reporters, attacked Tian and the mathematicians at Peking University. In an article published in a Beijing science newspaper, which ran under the headline "SHING-TUNG YAU IS SLAMMING ACADEMIC CORRUPTION IN CHINA," Yau called Tian "a complete mess." He accused him of holding multiple professorships and of collecting a hundred and twenty-five thousand dollars for a few months' work at a Chinese university, while students were living on a hundred dollars a month. He also charged Tian with shoddy scholarship and plagiarism, and with intimidating his graduate students into letting him add his name to their papers. "Since I promoted him all the way to his academic fame today, I should also take responsibility for his improper behavior," Yau was quoted as saying to a reporter, explaining why he felt obliged to speak out.

In another interview, Yau described how the Fields committee had passed Tian over in 1988 and how he had lobbied on Tian's behalf with various prize committees, including one at the National Science Foundation, which awarded Tian five hundred thousand dollars in 1994.

Tian was appalled by Yau's attacks, but he felt that, as Yau's former student, there was little he could do about them. "His accusations were baseless," Tian told us. But, he added, "I have deep roots in Chinese culture. A teacher is a teacher. There is respect. It is very hard for me to think of anything to do."

While Yau was in China, he visited Xi-Ping Zhu, a protégé of his who was now chairman of the mathematics department at Sun Yat-sen University. In the spring of 2003, after Perelman completed his lecture tour in the United States, Yau had recruited Zhu and an-

"Great, but how is he in bed?"

• •

other student, Huai-Dong Cao, a professor at Lehigh University, to undertake an explication of Perelman's proof. Zhu and Cao had studied the Ricci flow under Yau, who considered Zhu, in particular, to be a mathematician of exceptional promise. "We have to figure out whether Perelman's paper holds together," Yau told them. Yau arranged for Zhu to spend the 2005-06 academic year at Harvard, where he gave a seminar on Perelman's proof and continued to work on his paper with Cao.

On April 13th of this year, the thirty-one mathematicians on the editorial board of the *Asian Journal of Mathematics* received a brief e-mail from Yau and the journal's co-editor informing them that they had three days to comment on a paper by Xi-Ping Zhu and Huai-Dong Cao titled "The Hamilton-Perelman Theory of Ricci Flow: The Poincaré and Geometrization Conjectures," which Yau planned to publish in the journal. The e-mail did not include a copy of the paper, reports from referees, or an abstract. At least one board member asked to see the paper but was told that it was not available. On April 16th, Cao received a message from Yau telling him that the paper had been accepted by the *A.J.M.*, and an abstract was posted on the journal's Web site.

A month later, Yau had lunch in Cambridge with Jim Carlson, the president of the Clay Institute. He told Carlson that he wanted to trade a copy of Zhu and Cao's paper for a copy of Tian and Morgan's book manuscript. Yau told us he was worried that Tian would try to steal from Zhu and Cao's work, and he wanted to give each party simultaneous access to what the other had written. "I had a lunch with Carlson to request to exchange both manuscripts to make sure that nobody can copy the other," Yau said. Carlson demurred, explaining that the Clay Institute had not yet received Tian and Morgan's complete manuscript.

By the end of the following week, the title of Zhu and Cao's paper on the *A.J.M.'s* Web site had changed, to "A Complete Proof of the Poincaré and Geometrization Conjectures: Application of the Hamilton-Perelman Theory of the Ricci Flow." The abstract had also been revised. A new sentence explained, "This proof should be considered as the crowning achievement of the Hamilton-Perelman theory of Ricci flow."

Zhu and Cao's paper was more than three hundred pages long and filled the *A.J.M.'s* entire June issue. The bulk of the paper is devoted to reconstructing many of Hamilton's Ricci-flow results—including results that Perelman had made use of in his proof—and much of Perelman's proof of the Poincaré. In their introduction, Zhu and Cao credit Perelman with having "brought in fresh new ideas to figure out important steps to overcome the main obstacles that remained in the program of Hamilton." However, they write, they were obliged to "substitute several key arguments of Perelman by new approaches based on our study, because we were unable to comprehend these original arguments of Perelman which are essential to the completion of the geometrization program." Mathematicians familiar with Perelman's proof disputed the idea that Zhu and Cao had contributed significant new approaches to the Poincaré. "Perelman already did it and what he did was complete and correct," John Morgan said. "I don't see that they did anything different."

By early June, Yau had begun to promote the proof publicly. On June 3rd, at his mathematics institute in Beijing, he held a press conference. The acting director of the mathematics institute, attempting to explain the relative contributions of the different mathematicians who had worked on the Poincaré, said, "Hamilton contributed over fifty per cent; the Russian, Perelman, about twenty-five per cent; and the Chinese, Yau, Zhu, and Cao et al., about thirty per cent." (Evidently, simple addition can sometimes trip up even a mathematician.) Yau added, "Given the significance of the Poincaré, that Chinese mathematicians played a thirty-per-cent role is by no means easy. It is a very important contribution."

On June 12th, the week before Yau's conference on string theory opened in Beijing, the *South China Morning Post* reported, "Mainland mathematicians who helped crack a 'millennium math problem' will present the methodology and findings to physicist Stephen Hawking. . . . Yau Shing-Tung, who organized Professor Hawking's visit and is also Professor Cao's teacher, said yesterday he would present the findings to Professor Hawking because he believed the knowledge would help his research into the formation of black holes."

On the morning of his lecture in Beijing, Yau told us, "We want our contribution understood. And this is also a strategy to encourage Zhu, who is in China and who has done really spectacular work. I mean, important work with

"Call me 'dude' again! I dare you! I double-dare you, Alexander! Call me 'dude' one more goddam time!"

a century-long problem, which will probably have another few century-long implications. If you can attach your name in any way, it is a contribution."

E. T. Bell, the author of "Men of Mathematics," a witty history of the discipline published in 1937, once lamented "the squabbles over priority which disfigure scientific history." But in the days before e-mail, blogs, and Web sites, a certain decorum usually prevailed. In 1881, Poincaré, who was then at the University of Caen, had an altercation with a German mathematician in Leipzig named Felix Klein. Poincaré had published several papers in which he labelled certain functions "Fuchsian," after another mathematician. Klein wrote to Poincaré, pointing out that he and others had done significant work on these functions, too. An exchange of polite letters between Leipzig and Caen ensued. Poincaré's last word on the subject was a quote from Goethe's "Faust": "*Name ist Schall und Rauch.*" Loosely translated, that corresponds to Shakespeare's "What's in a name?"

This, essentially, is what Yau's friends are asking themselves. "I find myself getting annoyed with Yau that he seems to feel the need for more kudos," Dan Stroock, of M.I.T., said. "This is a guy who did magnificent things, for which he was magnificently rewarded. He won every prize to be won. I find it a little mean of him to seem to be trying to get a share of this as well." Stroock pointed out that, twenty-five years ago, Yau was in a situation very similar to the one Perelman is in today. His most famous result, on Calabi-Yau manifolds, was hugely important for theoretical physics. "Calabi outlined a program," Stroock said. "In a real sense, Yau was Calabi's Perelman. Now he's on the other side. He's had no compunction at all in taking the lion's share of credit for Calabi-Yau. And now he seems to be resenting Perelman getting credit for completing Hamilton's program. I don't know if the analogy has ever occurred to him."

Mathematics, more than many other fields, depends on collaboration. Most problems require the insights of several mathematicians in order to be solved, and the profession has evolved a standard for crediting individual contributions that is as stringent as the rules governing math itself. As Perelman put it, "If everyone is honest, it is natural to share ideas." Many mathematicians view Yau's conduct over the Poincaré as a violation of this basic ethic, and worry about the damage it has caused the profession. "Politics, power, and control have no legitimate role in our community, and they threaten the integrity of our field," Phillip Griffiths said.

Perelman likes to attend opera performances at the Mariinsky Theatre, in St. Petersburg. Sitting high up in the back of the house, he can't make out the singers' expressions or see the details of their costumes. But he cares only about the sound of their voices, and he says that the acoustics are better where he sits than anywhere else in the theatre. Perelman views the mathematics community—and much of the larger world—from a similar remove.

Before we arrived in St. Petersburg, on June 23rd, we had sent several messages to his e-mail address at the Steklov Institute, hoping to arrange a meeting, but he had not replied. We took a taxi to his apartment building and, reluctant to intrude on his privacy, left a book—a collection of John Nash's papers—in his mailbox, along with a card saying that we would be sitting on a bench in a nearby playground the following afternoon. The next day, after Perelman failed to appear, we left a box of pearl tea and a note describing some of the questions we hoped to discuss with him. We repeated this ritual a third time. Finally, believing that Perelman was out of town, we pressed the buzzer for his apartment, hoping at least to speak with his mother. A woman answered and let us inside. Perelman met us in the dimly lit hallway of the apartment. It turned out that he had not checked his Steklov e-mail address for months, and had not looked in his mailbox all week. He had no idea who we were.

We arranged to meet at ten the following morning on Nevsky Prospekt. From there, Perelman, dressed in a sports coat and loafers, took us on a four-hour walking tour of the city, commenting on every building and vista. After that, we all went to a vocal competition at the St. Petersburg Conservatory, which lasted for five hours. Perelman repeatedly said that he had retired from the mathematics community and no longer considered himself a professional mathematician. He mentioned a dispute that he had had years earlier with a collaborator over how to credit the author of a particular proof, and said that he was dismayed by the discipline's lax ethics. "It is not people who break ethical standards who are regarded as aliens," he said. "It is people like me who are isolated." We asked him whether he had read Cao and Zhu's paper. "It is not clear to me what new contribution did they make," he said. "Apparently, Zhu did not quite understand the argument and reworked it." As for Yau, Perelman said, "I can't say I'm outraged. Other people do worse. Of course, there are many mathematicians who are more or less honest. But almost all of them are conformists. They are more or less honest, but they tolerate those who are not honest."

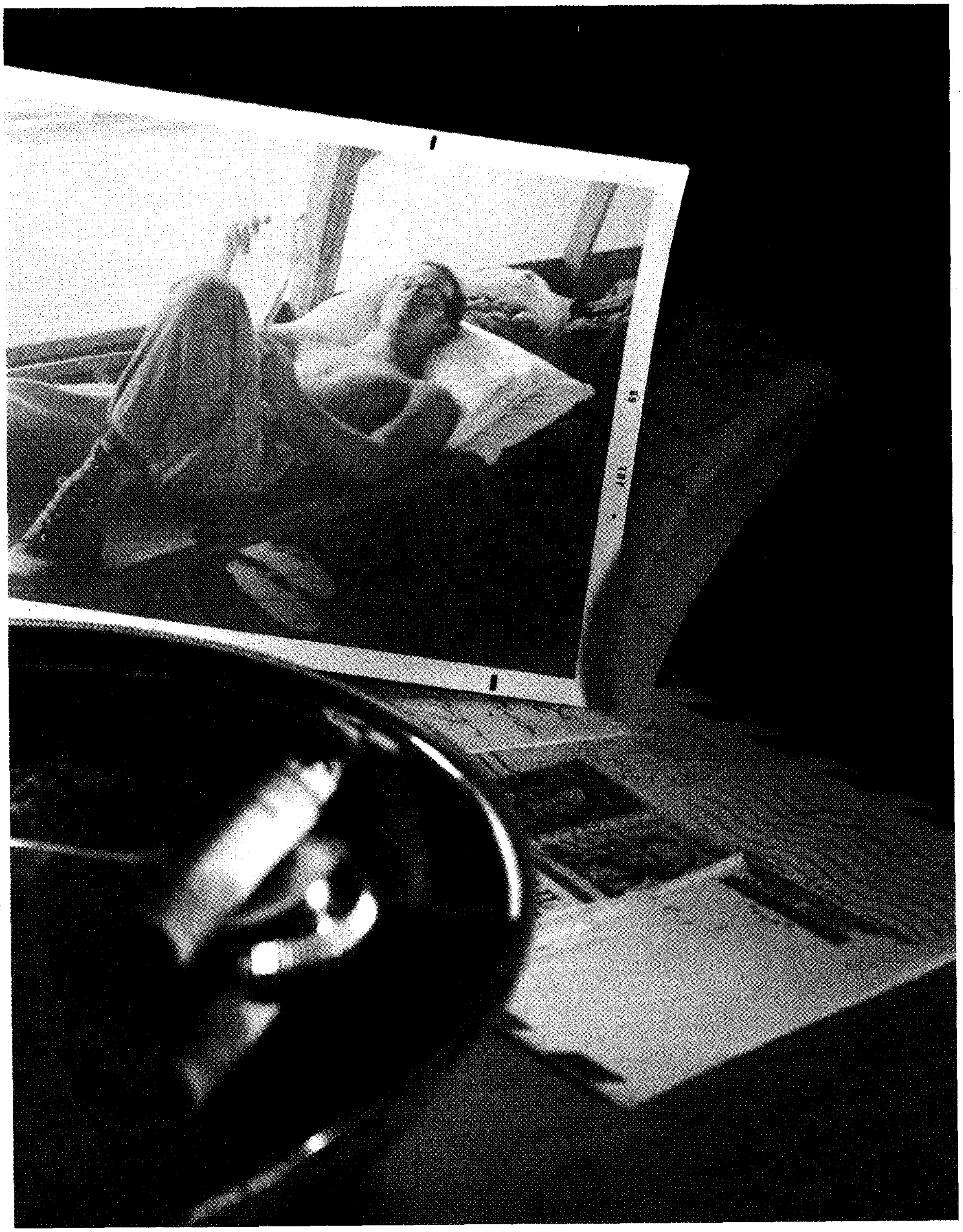
The prospect of being awarded a Fields Medal had forced him to make a complete break with his profession. "As long as I was not conspicuous, I had a choice," Perelman explained. "Either to make some ugly thing"—a fuss about the math community's lack of integrity—"or, if I didn't do this kind of thing, to be treated as a pet. Now, when I become a very conspicuous person, I cannot stay a pet and say nothing. That is why I had to quit." We asked Perelman whether, by refusing the Fields and withdrawing from his profession, he was eliminating any possibility of influencing the discipline. "I am not a politician!" he replied, angrily. Perelman would not say whether his objection to awards extended to the Clay Institute's million-dollar prize. "I'm not going to decide whether to accept the prize until it is offered," he said.

Mikhail Gromov, the Russian geometer, said that he understood Perelman's logic: "To do great work, you have to have a pure mind. You can think only about the mathematics. Everything else is human weakness. Accepting prizes is showing weakness." Others might view Perelman's refusal to accept a Fields as arrogant, Gromov said, but his principles are admirable. "The ideal scientist does science and cares about nothing else," he said. "He wants to live this ideal. Now, I don't think he really lives on this ideal plane. But he wants to." ♦

FICTION

HOW WAS IT TO BE DEAD?

BY RICHARD FORD



The exact status of my marriage to Sally Caldwell requires, I believe, some amplification. It is still a marriage that's officially going on, yet by any accounting has become strange—in fact, the strangest I know, and within whose unusual circumstances I myself have acted very strangely.

Seven months ago, in April of this millennial year, I took a journey down memory lane to an old cadets' reunion at the brown stucco, pantile-roof campus of my former military school—Gulf Pines, on the Mississippi coast. Lonesome Pines, we all called it. The campus and its shabby buildings, like apparently everything else in that world, had devolved over time to become an all-white Christian Identity school, which had itself, by defaulting on its debts, been sold to a corporate entity—the ancient palms, wooden goalposts, dusty parade grounds, dormitories, and classroom installments soon to be cleared as a parking structure for the floating casino across Route 90.

During this visit, I happened to hear from Dudley Phelps, who's retired out of the laminated-door business up in Little Rock, that Wally Caldwell, once our Lonesome Pines classmate, but more significantly once my wife's husband, until he got himself shell-shocked in Vietnam and wandered off seemingly forever, causing Sally to have him declared dead (no easy trick without a body or other evidence of death's likelihood)—*this* Wally Caldwell was reported by people in the know to have appeared again. Alive. Upon the earth. And—I was sure when I heard it—eager to stir up emotional dust none of us had seen the likes of.

Nobody knew much. We all stood around the breezy, hot parade ground in short-sleeve pastel shirts and chinos, talking committedly, chins tucked into our necks, the pale, wispy grass smelling of shrimp, ammonia, and diesel, trying to unearth good concrete memories—the deaf-school team we played in football that hilariously beat the shit out of us—anything that we could feel positive about and that could make adolescence seem to have been worthwhile, though agreeing darkly that we were all of us pretty hard cases when we arrived. (Actually, I was not a hard case at all.)

We had a keg of beer somebody'd brought. The Gulf was just as the Atlantic is in summer: brownish, sluggish, a dingy aqueous apron stretching to nowhere—though warm as bathwater instead of dick-shrinkingly cold. We all solemnly stood and drank the warm beer, ate weenies in stale buns, and did our best not to feel dispirited and on-in-years. We chatted disapprovingly about how the Coast had changed, how the South had traded its tarnished soul for a more debased graven image of gambling loot, how the upcoming election would probably be won by the wrong dope. Surprisingly, many of my old classmates had gone to Nam like Wally and come back Democrats.

And then, around 2 P.M., when the sun sat straight over our sweating heads like a dentist's lamp and we'd all begun to laugh about what a shithole this place had really been, how we didn't mind seeing it disappear, how we'd all cried ourselves to sleep in our metal bunks on so many breathless, mosquito-tortured nights on account of cruel loneliness and youth and deep hatred for the other cadets, we all, by no signal given, just began to stray back toward our rental cars, or across the highway to the casino for some stolen fun, or back to motels or Winnebagos or the airport in New Orleans or Mobile, or just back, as if we could go back far enough to where it would all be forgotten and gone forever, the way it already should've been. Why were we there? By the end, none of us could've said.

How, though, do you contemplate such news as this possible Wally sighting? I had no personal memories of Cadet W. Caldwell, only pictures Sally kept (and kept hidden): color snapshots on the beach with their kids, in Saugatuck; a shirtless, dog-tagged Wally squinting into the summer sun like J.F.K., holding a copy of "Origin of Species" with a look of mock puzzlement on his young face; a few tuxedoed wedding photos from 1969, where Wally looked lumpy and wise and scared to death of what lay before him; a yearbook portrait from Illinois State, showing Walter "the Wall" Caldwell, Class of '67, Plant Biology, where he was deemed (sadly, I felt) to be "Trustworthy, a friend to all." "Solid where it counts" (which he wasn't). "Call me Mr. Wall."

These ancient, moistened relics did not, to me, a real husband make. Though once they had to Sally—a tall, blond, blue-eyed beauty with small breasts, thin fingers, smooth legs, and a small limp from a tennis mishap—a college cheerleader who fell for the shy, heavy-legged, curiously-gazing rich boy in her genetics class, and who smiled when she talked because so much made her happy, who didn't have problems with physical things and so introduced the trusting "Wall" to bed and to cheap motels out Highway 9, so captivating him that by spring break "they were pregnant." And pregnant again and married by the time Wally got called by the Army and joined the Navy instead, in 1969, and went off to a war.

From which, in a sense, he never returned. Though he tried for a couple of weeks in 1971, but just one day walked off from their little apartment in the Chicago suburb of Hoffman Estates, never to return with a sound or a glimpse. Kids, wife, parents, a few friends. A future. *Boop*. Over.

This was the extent of my knowledge of Wally the uxorious. He was already legally "dead" when I came on the scene in '87 and tried to rent Sally some expandable office space in Manasquan. She'd identified me from a bogus reminiscence I wrote for the Gulf Pines *Pine Boughs* newsletter, though I had no actual memory of Wally and was merely on the Casualties Committee, responsible for "personal" anecdotes about classmates nobody remembered, but whose loved ones didn't want them seeming like complete ciphers or lost souls, even if they were.

The thought that mystery man Walter B. Caldwell might still be alive was, as you can imagine, unwieldy personal cargo to be carrying home, Mississippi to New Jersey. There could probably be stranger turns of events. But if so I'd like you to name one. And, while you're at it, name one you'd find easy to keep as your little secret, something you'd rather not have spread around.

On arriving back to Sea-Clift, I decided that rogue rumors were always shooting around like paper airplanes in everybody's life, and that this was likely just one more. Some old Lonesome Pines alum, deep in his cups and reeling through the red-light district of Amsterdam or Bangkok, suddenly spies a pathetic homeless man weaving on a cor-

JESSICA HINES, "MY BROTHER'S WAR #64" (2006)

ner, a large, fleshy, unshaven "American-looking" clod, filthy in a tattered, greasy overcoat and duct-taped shoes, yet who has a particularly arresting, sweet smile animating tiny haunted eyes and who seems to stare back knowingly. After a pause, there's a second cadged look, then a long unformed thought about it, followed by a decision to leave well enough alone (where well enough's always happiest). But, then, in memory's narrow eye comes a fixifying certainty, an absolute recognition—a sighting. And *kerplunk:* Wally *lives!* (And will be in your house eating dinner by next Tuesday.)

In eight years of what I thought was much more than satisfying-fulfilling marriage, not to mention thirty since Wally walked away and didn't come back, Sally had made positive adjustments to what might've driven most people bat-shit crazy with anger and not-knowing, and with anxiety over the anger and not-knowing. Therefore to drop this little hand grenade of uncertainty into her life, I concluded, would actually be unfriendly. (I'd decided by then that it wasn't true, so it really wasn't a hand grenade in *my* life.) What was either of us supposed to do with the news, short of a full-bore "Have You Seen This Man" campaign (I didn't *want* to see him), "aged" photos of Wally stapled to bulletin boards and splintery telephone poles beside aromatherapy flyers and lost-cat posters, with appeals made to "Live at 5"?

After which he still wouldn't show up. Because—of course—he'd long ago climbed over a bridge rail or slipped off a boat transom or a rockface in the remotest Arizona canyon and said goodbye to this world of woes.

Case closed. R.I.P., Mr. Wall. My dream, instead of my nightmare, come true.

To which fickle fate says: Dream on, dream on, dream on.

Because, sometime in early May, Sally caught the United shuttle out to Chicago to visit the former in-laws in Lake Forest. I'm always officially invited to these events, but have never gone, for obvious reasons—although this might've been the time. The occasion was the aged Caldwells' (Warner and Constance) sixtieth wedding anniversary. A party was planned at the formerly no-Jews-or-blacks-allowed Wik-O-Mek Country Club. Sally's two grim, grown but disenchanted children, Shelby and Chloë, were supposedly coming from northern Idaho. They'd long ago fallen out with their mom over having their dad declared a croaker—prematurely, they felt. You can only imagine how they loathe me. Both kids are neck high in charismatic Mormon doings (likewise whites-only) out in Spirit Lake, where for all I know they practice cannibalism. They never send a Christmas card, though they plan to be in the "where's mine" line when the grandparents shuffle off. When I first met Sally, she was still making piteous efforts to include them in her new life in New Jersey—all of which they rebuffed like cruel suitors, until she was compelled to close the door on both of them, which thrilled me. Too much unredeemed loss can be fatal. At some point—and its arrival may not be obvious, so you have to be on the lookout for it—you have to let life please you if it will, and consign the past to its midden (easier said than done, of course, as we all know).

When Sally drove her renter from O'Hare to Lake Forest and up to the winding-drive, many-winged, moss-and-ivy-fronted fieldstone Caldwell manse, which sits on a bluff of the lake, she entered the long, drafty, monarchical drawing room with her folding suitcase—she was considered a beloved family member and didn't need to knock. And there, seated on the rolled-and-pleated, overstuffed Victorian leather settee, looking for all the world like the Caldwells' gardener asked in to review next season's perennial-planning strategies (Did we do the jonquils right? Is there a reason to keep the wisteria, since it's really not their climate?), there was a man she thought she'd never seen before but queerly felt she knew. (It was the beady, piggy eyes.) There was "the Wall." Wally Caldwell. Her husband. Back from oblivion, at home in Lake Forest.

I don't know what went on that weekend. Pensive, hands-behind-the-back walks along the palliative Lake Michigan beach. Angry recrimination sessions out of earshot of the old folks. (Her kids blessedly didn't show.) Moaning-crying jags, shouting, nights spent sweating, heart-battering, fists balled in fury, frustration, denial, and a crass inability to take it all in, to believe, to stare truth in the beezer. (Think how *you'd* feel!) And no doubt then the rueful, poisoned thoughts of *why*? And why *now*? Why not just last on to the end on Mull? (The craggy, windswept isle off Scotland's coast where Wally'd moled away for decades.) Mull life over till nothing's left of it, soldier the remaining yards alone, instead of fucking everything up for everybody—again. TV's much better at these kinds of stories, since the imponderableness of it all is conveniently swept away when the commercials for drain openers, stool softeners, and talking potato chips pop on, and all's electronically "forgotten," during which time the aggrieved principals can make adjustments to life's weird wreckage, get ready to come back and sort things out for the better, so that after many tears are shed, fists clenched, hearts broken but declared mendable, everyone's again declared "all set," as they say in New Jersey. All set? Ha! I say. Ha-ha, ha! Ha, ha-ha-ha! All set, my ass.

Sally flew home on Monday—having said nothing of Johnny-jump-up Wally during our weekend phone calls. I drove to Newark to get her and on the ride back could tell she was plainly altered—by something—but said nothing. It is a well-learned lesson of second marriages never to insist on what you don't absolutely have to insist on, since your feelings are probably about nothing but yourself and your own pitiable needs and are not appropriately sympathetic to the needs of the insistee in question. Second marriages, especially good ones like ours, could fill three doorstop-size reference books with black-letter do's and don'ts. And you'd have to be studious if you hoped to get past Volume I.

When we reached our house, No. 7 Poincinet Road, the sky was already resolving upon sunset. The western heavens were their brightest possible faultless blue. Pre-Memorial Day beach enthusiasts were packing up their books and blankets and transistors and sun reflectors, and heading off for a cocktail or a shrimp plate at the Surfcaster or a snuggle at the Conquistador Suites, as the air cooled and softened ahead of night's fall.

I put on my favorite Ben Webster, made a pair of Salty Dogs, thought about a drive later on up to Ortley Beach for a grilled bluefish at Neptune's Daily Catch Bistro and conceivably a snuggle of our own to the accompaniment of nature's sift and sigh and the muttered voices of the striper fishermen who haunt our beach after the tide's turn.

And then she simply told me, just as I was walking into the living room, ready for a full debriefing.

Something there is in humans that wants to make sure you're doing something busying at the exact instant of hearing unwelcome news—as though if your hands are full you'll just rumble right on through the whole thing, unfazed. "Wally? Alive? Really? Here, try a sip of this, see if I put in too much Donald Duck. Happy to add more Gilbey's. Well, ole Wall—whaddaya know? How'd the Wall seem? Don't you just love how Ben gets that breathy tremolo into 'Georgia on My Mind'? Hoagy'd love it. Give Wally my best. How was it to be dead?"

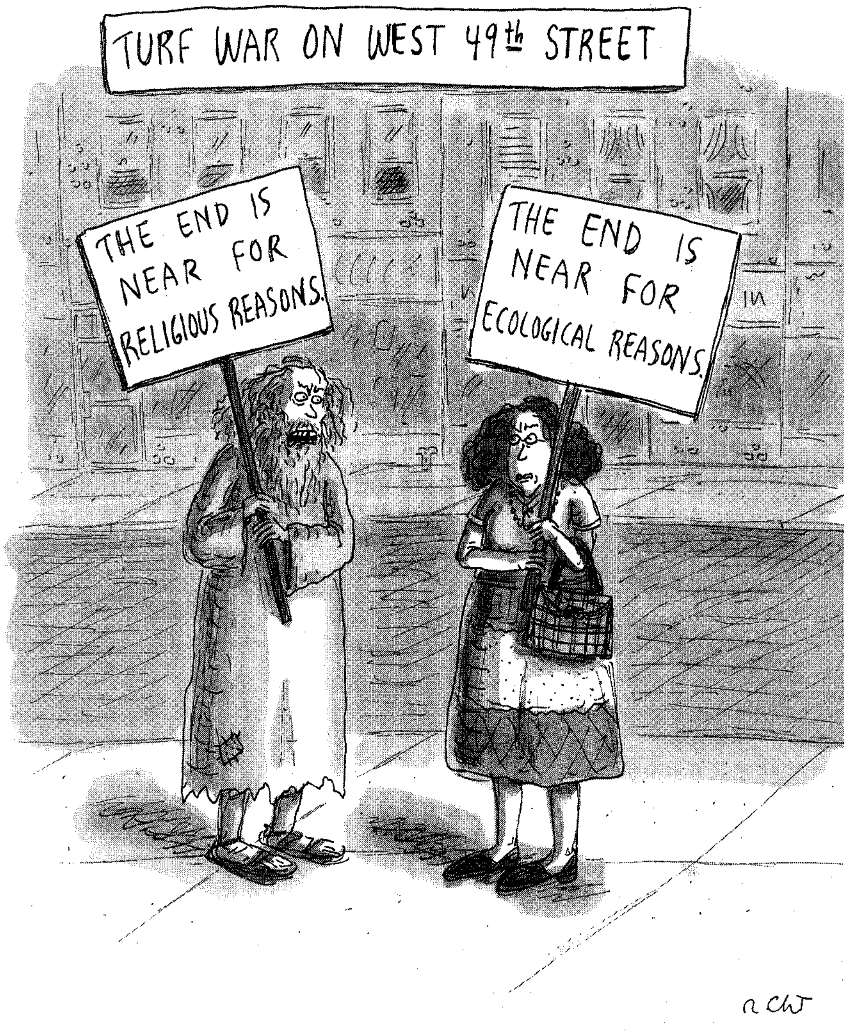
I should say straight out: never tell anyone that you know how she or he feels unless you happen to be, just at that second, stabbing yourself with the very same knife in the very same place in the very same heart that she or he is stabbing. Because, if you're not, then you don't know how that person feels. I can barely tell you how *I* felt when Sally said, "Frank, when I got to Lake Forest, Wally was there." (Use of my name, Frank, as always, a harbinger of things unpopular. I should change my name to Al.)

I know for a fact that I said nothing when I heard these words. I managed to put my Salty Dog down on the glass coffee table and lower myself onto the brown suède couch beside her, to put both my hands on top of my knees and gaze out at the darkening Atlantic, where the ghostly figures of high-booted fishermen faced the surf and, far out to sea, the sky still showed a brilliant reflected sliver of azure. Sally sat as I did and may have felt as I did—*surprised.*

Sometimes simple words are the best, better than images of the world cracking open; or of how much everything's like a sitcom and what a pity William Bendix isn't still around to play Wally—or me. Or the ethical-culture response: that catastrophe's "a good thing for everybody," since it dramatizes life's great mystery and reveals how much all is artifice. "Surprised" is good enough. When I heard that Wally Caldwell, age fifty-five, missing for thirty years, during which time many things had happened and substantial adjustments had been made to the nature of existence on earth—when I heard that Wally was alive in Lake Forest and had spent the weekend doing God knows what with my wife, I was surprised.

Sally'd had three days with Wally already. She had gotten over the shock of a bearded, avuncular, and strange Wally hiding out in his parents' house like some scary older brother with a terrible wound, whom you see only flickeringly behind shadowy chintz curtains in an upstairs dormer window, but who may be heard to moan. Her attitude was—and I liked it, since it was typical of her get-up-and-fix-things positivism—that while, yes, Wally's reappearance *had* caused some tricky issues to pop up, needing to be resolved, and that while she understood how "this whole business" maybe put me in an awkward position (vis-à-vis, say, the past, the present, and the future), this was still a "human situation," no one was a culprit (of course not), no one had bad will (except me), and we would all address this situation as a threesome, so that as little damage as possible would be done to as few innocent souls and lives.

Wally's story, she told me, sitting on the suède couch that faced out to the springtime Atlantic, as our Salty Dogs turned watery and dark descended, was "one of those stories" fashioned by war and trauma, by sadness, fear, and resentment, and by the chaotic urge to escape all the other causes, aided by (what else?) "some kind of schizoid detachment" that induced amnesia, so that for years Wally


TURF WAR ON WEST 49th STREET
THE END IS NEAR FOR RELIGIOUS REASONS.
THE END IS NEAR FOR ECOLOGICAL REASONS.

couldn't remember big portions of his prior life, although certain portions were crystal clear.

Wally, it seems, couldn't put everything together, though he admitted he hadn't just gone out to pick up the *Trib* thirty years ago, bumped his head getting into his Beetle, and suffered a curtain to close. It had to have been—this he'd no doubt admitted on one of their cozy Lake Michigan beach tête-à-têtes—that "something unconscious was working on him," some failure to face the world he confronted as a Viet vet with a (minor) head wound and a family and a future as a horticulturist looming, the whole undifferentiated world just flooding in on him like a dam bursting with cows and trees and cars and church steeples swirling away in the gully wash, and him in with them. (There are good strategies for coping with this kind of thing, of course, but you have to want to.)

Cutting (blessedly) to the chase, Wally's trauma, fear, resentment, and elective amnesia had carried him as far away from the Chicago suburbs, from his wife and two kids, as Glasgow, in Scotland, where for a time he became "caught up" in "the subculture" that lived communally, practiced good feeling for everything, experimented with cannabis and other mind-rousing drugs, fucked like bunny rabbits, made jewelry by hand and sold it on damp streets, practiced subsistence-farming techniques, made their own clothes and set their communal sights on spiritual-but-not-mainstream-religious revelation. In other words, the Manson Family, led by Ozzie and Harriet.

Eventually, Wally said, the "petrol" had run out of the communal subculture, and he had migrated up to the "wilds" of Scotland, first to the Isle of Skye, then to Harris, then to Muck, and finally to Mull, where he'd found employment in the "Scottish blackface" industry (sheep) and finally—more to his talents and likings—as a gardener on the laird's estate and, as time went on, as head gardener and arborist (the laird was wild for planting spruce trees), and eventually as the estate manager for the entire shitaree. A complete existence was there, Wally said, a long way from Lake Forest "and that whole life" (again, meaning wife and kids), from the Cubs, the Wrigley Building, the Sears Tower, the river dyed green—*again*, the whole deluging, undifferentiated crash-in of modern existence, American style, whose sudsy, brown-tree-trunk-littered surface most of us somehow manage to keep our heads above so we can see our duty and do it. I'm not impartial in these matters. Why should I be?

In due time, Wally got used to living semi-officially in the stone manager's cottage, scrubbing the loo, restocking the fridge with haggis, smoking fish, burning peat, reading the *Herald*, listening to Radio 4, snapping on the telly, sipping his cuppa, keeping his Wellies dry and his Barbour waxed during the long Mull winters. This was the wee life, the one he was suited for and entitled to and where he expected his days to end among the cold stones and rills and crags and moors and cairns and gorse and windblown cedars of his own dull nature—there in his half-chosen, half-fated, half-fucked-up-and-escaped-to destination resort from life gone kaflooey.

Enter then the Internet—in the form of the old laird's young son, Morgil, who'd taken the reins of the property (having been to college at Florida State) and who'd begun to suspect that this lumpy American in the manager's accommodation was probably other than he'd declared himself, was possibly an old draft dodger or a fugitive from some abysmal crime in his own country—some guy who dressed up in clown suits and ate little boys for lunch. The standard idea of America, viewed from abroad.

What young Morgil found when he checked—and who'd be shocked—was a "Wally Caldwell" Web site that the old Lake Forest parents had erected as a last hope, or whatever inspires Web sites: No outstanding warrants, Interpol alerts, or Scotland Yard red flags were attached to the site, only several sequentially aged photos of Wally (one actually in a Barbour) that looked exactly like the Wally out planting spruce sprigs and pruning other ones like a character in D. H. Lawrence.

Young Morgil didn't feel it would be right to send a blind message out of the blue, so he tacked a note to Wally's door the next morning—a color printout of the Caldwell home page, the computerized middle-aged face side by side with the yearbook photo from Illinois State ("Call me Mr. Wall"). No mention was made of Sally, Shelby, and Chloë, or of the fact that he'd been declared *expired.* The only words it contained were his parents' tender entreaties: "Come home, Wally, wherever you are, *if* you are. We're not mad at you. We're still here in Lake Forest, Mom and Dad. We can't last forever."

And so he did. Wally crossed the sea to home and the welcome arms of his mom and dad. A changed bloke, but nonetheless their moody, slow-thinking

A HUMMINGBIRD

At Nora's first post-divorce Labor Day bash
there's a fluster and a fuss and a fidget
in the fuchsia bells. "Two fingers of sour mash,
a maraschino cherry." "So the digit's
still a unit of measurement?" "While midgets
continue to demand a slice of the cake."
"A vibrator, you know, *that* kind of widget."
Now a ruby-throated hummingbird remakes
itself as it rolls on through mid-forest brake.
"I'm guessing she's had a neck lift *and* lipo."
"You know I still can't help but think of the 'Wake'
as the apogee, you know, of the typo."
Like an engine rolling on after a crash,
long after whatever it was made a splash.

—*Paul Muldoon*

son. Which was the strange tableau my unsuspecting wife walked in on, carrying her suitcase and lost memories.

At the conclusion of Sally's long recitation of the missing-Wally saga, a chronicle I wasn't that riveted by, since I didn't think it could foretell any good for me (I was right), she announced that she needed to take a nap. Events had pretty well wrung her out. She knew that I was not exactly a grinning cheerleader to these matters, that I was possibly as "mixed up" as she was (not true), and she needed just to lie in the dark alone for a while and let things—her word—"settle." She smiled at me, went around the room turning on lamps, suffusing the dark space she was abandoning me to with a bronze funeral-parlor light. She came around to where I'd stood up in front of the couch and kissed me on my cheek (oh, Lord) in a pallbearerish, buck-up-bud sort of way, then ceremoniously mounted the stairs not to *our room*, not to the marriage bower, the conjugal sanctum of sweet intimacies and blissful nod. But to the *guest room!*

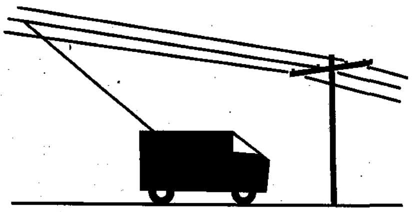
I might've gone crazy right then. I should've let her mount the stairs (I heard the guest-room floorboards squeezing), waited for her to get her shoes shucked and herself plopped wearily onto the cold counterpane, then roared upstairs, proclaiming and defaming, vilifying and contumelating, snatching knobs off doors, kicking table legs to splinters, cracking mirrors with my voice—laying down the law as I saw it and as it should be and as it served and protected. Let everybody on Poincinet Road and up the seaboard and all the ships at sea know that I'd sniffed out what was being served and wasn't having it and neither was anybody else inside my walls. One party left alone to his heartless devices, in his own heartless living room, while another heartless party skulks away to dreamland to revise fate and providence, ought to produce some ornate effects. No fucking way, José. This shit doesn't wash. My way or the highway. Irish (or Scots) need not apply. Members only. Don't even think of parking here.

But I didn't. And why I didn't was: I felt secure. Even though I could sense something approaching, like those elephants who feel the stealthy footfalls of Pygmy spear-toters far across savannas and flooded rivers. I felt at liberty to take an interest, to put on the white lab coat of objective investigator, to be Sally's partner with a magnifying glass, curious to find out what these old bones, relics, and potsherds of lost love have to tell. These stationary moments are the very ones, of course, when large decisions get decided. Great literature routinely skips them in favor of seismic shifts, hysterical laughter, and worlds cracking open, and in that way does us all a grave disservice.

What I did while Sally slept in the guest room was make myself a fresh Salty Dog, open a can of cocktail peanuts, and eat half of them, since bluefish at Neptune's Daily Catch had become a dead letter. I switched off the lights, sat awhile in the leather director's chair, hunkered forward over my knees in the chilly living room, and watched phosphorescent water lap the moonlit alabaster beach till way past high tide. Then I went upstairs to my "home office" and read the Asbury Park *Press*—stories about Elián González being preënrolled at Yale, a plan to make postmodern sculpture out of Y2K preventive gear and place it on the statehouse lawn in Trenton, a C.I.A. warning about a planned attack on our shores by Iran, and a lawsuit over a Circuit City in Bradley Beach being turned down by the local planning board, with the headline reading "HOW'S THE DOWNTICK AFFECTING HOLIDAY SHOPPING?"

I rechecked my rental inventory. (Memorial Day was three weeks away.) I took note that the N.J. Real Estate *Cold Call* reported that four million of our citizens were working, while only 4.1 per cent of our population was not—the longest economic boom in our history (now giving hissing sounds around the edges). Finally, I went back down, turned on the TV, watched the Nets lose to the Pistons, and went to sleep on the couch in my clothes.

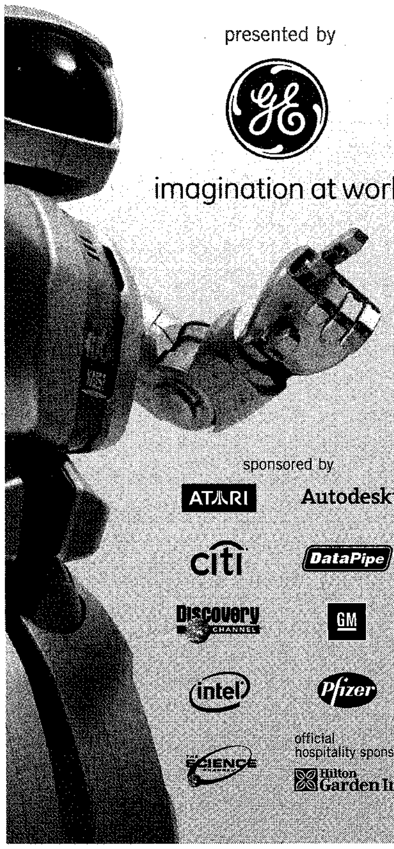
This isn't to suggest that Wally's reëmergence hadn't caught my notice and didn't burn my ass and didn't cause me to think that discomforting, messy, troublesome readjustments would need to take place and soon. Readjustments requiring Wally's being declared un-dead, requiring divorcing, estate replanning, and updated survivorship provisos, all while recriminations cut the air like steak knives, and all lasting a long time and raking everybody's patience, politeness, and complex sense of themselves over the hot coals like spareribs. That was going to happen. I may also have felt vulnerable to the accusation of marital Johnny-come-lately-ism. Though I'd never have met Sally Caldwell, never have married her (though I might still have romanced her), had it not been that Wally was gone—we all thought—for good.



What I, in fact, felt was: on my guard—but safe. The way you'd feel if crime statistics spiked in your neighborhood but you'd just rescued a two-hundred-pound Rottweiler from the shelter who saw you as his only friend whereas the wide world was his enemy.

Sally's and my marriage seemed as contingency-proof as we could construct it, using the human materials we're all equipped with. The other thing about second marriages—unlike first ones, which require only hot impulse and drag-strip hormones—is that they need good reasons to exist, reasons you're smart to pore over and get straight well beforehand. Sally and I had both conducted independent inquiries back when we met, and had each made a clear decision that marriage—to each other—promised more than anything else we could think of that would probably make us both "happy," and that neither of us harbored a single misgiving that wasn't appropriate to life anyway (illness we'd share; death we'd expect; depression we'd treat), and that any more time spent deciding was time we could spend having the time of our lives. Which as far as I'm concerned—and I know that Sally felt the same—we did.

Which is to say, we practiced the sweet legerdemain of adulthood shared. We formally renounced our unmarried personalities. We generalized the past on behalf of a sleek second-act mentality that viewed the leading edge of life to be all life was. We acknowledged that strong feelings were superior to original happiness, and promised never to ask the other if she or he really, really, really loved him



advertisement

EXPERIENCE THE FUTURE

WIRED NEXTFEST

SEPT 29 – OCT 1
JAVITS CENTER
NEW YORK CITY
Buy tickets at nextfest.net

presented by
GE imagination at work

sponsored by
ATARI Autodesk
citi DataPipe
Discovery Channel GM
intel Pfizer
Science
official hospitality sponsor
Hilton Garden Inn

or her, in the faith that affinity was love, and we had affinity. We stressed nuance and advocated that however we seemed was how we were. We declared that we were good in bed, and that lack of intimacy was usually self-imposed. We kept our kids at a wary but (at least in my case) positive distance. We deëmphasized becoming on behalf of being. We permanently renounced melancholy and nostalgia. We performed intentionally pointless acts like flying to Moline or Flint and back the same day because we were "archeologists." We ate Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners at named exits on the New Jersey Turnpike. We considered buying a pet refuge in Nyack, a B. & B. in New Hampshire.

In other words, we put in practice what the great novelist said about marriage (though he never quite had the genome for it himself). "If I should ever marry," he wrote, "I should pretend to think just a little better of life than I do." In Sally's case and mine, we thought a *lot* better of life than we'd ever thought we could. We were happy. We really, really loved each other. We lived. Together. And we didn't do a lot of looking right or left.

When Sally came down later that night and found me asleep on the couch beside the can of Planters with the TV playing "The Third Man" (the scene where Joseph Cotten gets bitten by the parrot), she wasn't unhappy with me—though she certainly wasn't happy. I understood that she'd just come unexpectedly face to face with big contingency—the thing we'd schemed against and almost beaten, and probably the only contingency that could've risen to eye level and stared us down: the reënlivening of Wally. And she didn't know what to do about it—though I did.

All marriages—all everythings—tote around contingencies whether we acknowledge them or don't. In all things good and giddy, there's always one measly eventuality that no one's thought about, or that hasn't been thought about in so long it almost doesn't exist. Only it does. Which is the one potentially fatal chink in the body armor of intimacy, in the unconditional this 'n' that, in the sacred vows, the pledging of troths, in the forever *anythings*. And that is: there's a back door *somewhere* to every deal, and there a draft can enter. All promises to be in love and "true to you forever" are premised on the iron contingency (unlikely or otherwise) that says: unless, of course, I fall in love "forever" with someone else. This is true even if we don't like it, which means that it isn't cynical to think it, but also means that someone else—someone we love and whom we'd rather have not know it—is as likely to know it as we are. Which acknowledgment may finally be as close to absolute intimacy as any of us can stand. Anything closer to the absolute than this is either death or as good as death. And death's where I draw the line. Realtors, of course, know all this better than anyone, since there's a silent Wally Caldwell in every deal, right down to the act of sale (which is like death) and sometimes even beyond it. In every agreement to buy or sell, there's also the proviso, acknowledged or not, that says "unless, of course, I don't want to anymore," or "that is, unless I change my mind," or "assuming my yoga instructor doesn't advise against it." The hallowed concept of *character* was invented to seal off these contingencies. But in this wan millennial election year are we really going to say that this concept is worth a nickel or a nacho? Or, for that matter, ever was?

Sally stood at the darkened thermal-glass window that gave upon the lightless Atlantic. She'd slept in her clothes, too, and was barefoot and had a green L. L. Bean blanket around her shoulders. I'd opened the door to the deck, and inside it was fifty degrees. I came awake studying her inky back without realizing that it was her inky back, or that it was even her—wondering if I was hallucinating or was it an optical trick of waking in darkness, or had a stranger or a ghost entered my house for shelter and not noticed me snoozing. I realized it was Sally only when I thought of Wally and of the despondency his renewed life might promise me.

"Do you feel a little better?" I wanted to let her know that I was here still among the living and that we'd been having a conversation earlier that I considered to be still going on.

"No." Hers was a mournful, husky, elderly-seeming voice. She pinched her Bean's blanket around her shoulders and coughed. "I feel terrible. But I feel exhilarated, too. My stomach's got butterflies and knots at the same time. Isn't that peculiar?"

"No, I wouldn't say that was necessarily so peculiar." I was trying my investigator's white lab coat on for size.

"A part of me wants to feel like my life's a total ruin and a fuckup, that there's a right way to do things and I've made a disaster out of it. That's how it feels." She wasn't facing me. I didn't really feel like I was talking to *her*. But, if not to her, then to who?

"That's not true," I said. "You didn't do anything wrong. You just flew to Chicago."

"There's no sense to spool everything back to sources, but I might've been a better wife to Wally."

"You're a good wife. You're a good wife to *me*." And then I didn't say this but thought it: And fuck Wally. He's an asshole. I'll gladly have him big-K killed and his body Hoffa'd out for birdseed. "What do you feel exhilarated about?" I said instead. Mr. Empathy.

"I'm not sure." She flashed a look around, her blond hair catching light from somewhere, her face tired and marked with shadowy lines from too sound sleep and the fatigue of travel.

"Well," I said, "exhilaration doesn't hurt anything. Maybe you were glad to see him. You always wondered where he went." I put a single cocktail peanut into my dry mouth and crunched it down. She turned back to the cold window, which was probably making her cold. "What's he going to do now," I said, "have himself reincarnated, or whatever you do?"

"It's pretty simple."

"I'll keep that in mind. What about the being-married-to-you part? Does he get to do that again? Or do I get you as salvage?"

"You get me as salvage." She turned and walked slowly to where I sat staring up at her, slightly dazzled, as if she were the ghost I'd mistaken her for. Her limp was pronounced because she was beat. She sat on the couch and leaned into me so I could smell the sweated, unwashed dankness of her hair. She put her hand limply on my knee and sighed as if she'd been holding her breath and hadn't realized it till now. Her coarse blanket prickled through my shirt. "He'd like to meet you," she said. "Or maybe I want him to meet you."

"Absolutely," I said, and could identify a privileged sarcasm. "We'll invite some people over. Maybe I'll interest him in a summer rental."

"That's not really necessary, is it?"

"Yes. I'm in command of my necessaries. You be in command of yours."

"Don't be bad to me about this. It flabbergasts me as much as it does you."

"That isn't true. I'm not exhilarated. Why are *you* exhilarated? I answered that for you, but I don't like my answer."

"Mmm. I think it's just so strange, and so familiar. I'm not mad at him anymore. I was for years. I was when I first saw him. It was like meeting the President or some famous person. I know him so well and then there he is and, of course, I don't know him. There was something exciting about that." She looked at me, put her hands atop each other on my cold knee, and smiled a sweet, tired, imploring, mercy-hoping smile. And then we didn't speak for a little while, just sat breathing in the cold air, each of us fancifully, forcefully seeking a context in which our separate views could join forces and fashion an acceptable and unified response. I was further from the middle of events and had some perspective, so the heavier burden fell on me. I'd already started suiting up in the raiments of patient understander. Oh, woe. Oh, why?

"Something has to happen," Sally said with unwanted certainty. "Something had to happen when Wally left. Something has to happen now that he's back. Nothing can't happen. That's my feeling."

"Who says?"

"Me," she said sadly. "I do."

"*What* has to happen?"

"I have to spend some time with him." Sally spoke reluctantly. "You'd want to do the same thing, Frank." She wrinkled her chin and slightly puffed her compressed lips. She often took on this look when she was sitting at her desk composing a letter.

"No, I wouldn't. I'd buy him a first-class ticket to any place he wanted to go in Micronesia and never think about him again. Where're you planning to spend time with him? The Catskills? The Lower Atlas? Am I supposed to be there, too, so I can get closer to *my* needs? I'm close enough to them now. I'm sitting beside you. I'm married to you."

"You *are* married to me." She actually gasped then and sobbed, then gasped again and squeezed my hand harder than anybody'd ever squeezed it, and shook her head from side to side so that tears dashed onto my cheek. It was as if we were both crying. Though why I would've been crying, I don't know. I should've been howling.

I'll make the rest short, though it's not sweet.

I buttoned the buttons on my moral investigator's lab coat and got busy with the program. Sally said she'd be willing to invite Wally down to Sea-Clift—either to a rental she would arrange for him (using who as agent?) or to our house, where he could put up in one of the two guest rooms for the short time he'd be here. The oddest things can be made to seem plausible if you insist they are. Remember Huxley on Einstein. Remember the Trojan Horse. Or else, Sally said, she and he could "go away somewhere" (the Rif, the Pampas, the Silk Road to Cathay). They wouldn't be "together," of course, more like brother and sister having a *wander*, during which crucial period they'd perform what few in their situation (how many are in that situation?) could hope to perform: a putting to rest, an airing, a reëxamination of old love allowed to wither and die, saying the unsayable, feeling the unpermitted, reconciling paths not taken and those taken. Cleanse and heal, come back stronger. Come back to me. Yes, there might be some crying, some shouting, some laughter, some hugging, some crisp slappings across the face. But they would be "within a context," and in "real time," or some such nonsense, and all those decades would be drained of their sour water, rolled up, and put away like a late-autumn garden hose, never to leave the garage again. In other words, all this turmoil *was* a "good thing" (if not for everybody)—life's mystery dramatized, all is artifice, connected boxes, etc., etc., etc.

The Silk Road strategy didn't appeal to me, for obvious reasons. I suggested (these things *do* happen) that we invite

ADVERTISEMENT

on the town

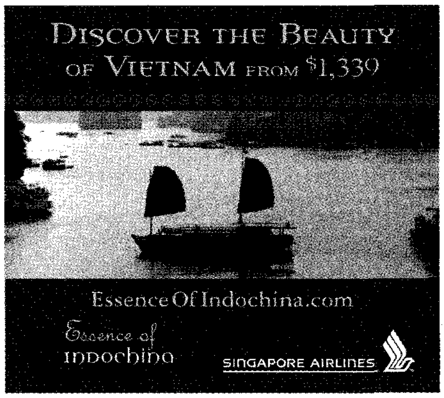
BE THE FIRST TO HEAR ABOUT EVENTS, PROMOTIONS, AND SPECIAL OFFERS FROM *NEW YORKER* ADVERTISERS.

CHASING BUTTERFLIES SWEEPSTAKES

Find the hidden butterflies perched in four small space advertisements in this issue of *The New Yorker* and you may win a $500 gift certificate toward products from a select *New Yorker* advertiser.

For more information and to enter, visit www.newyorkerreaderlink.com.

No purchase necessary. To enter, you must be a legal U.S. resident and 18 years of age or older. Entries must be received by 11:59 P.M. E.S.T. on September 28, 2006. Complete rules and regulations are available online. Odds of winning depend on the number of entries received. Sponsored by *The New Yorker* Promotion Department, 4 Times Square, New York, NY 10036.



DISCOVER THE BEAUTY OF VIETNAM FROM $1,339

EssenceOfIndochina.com

Essence of Indochina

SINGAPORE AIRLINES

MARTHA'S VINEYARD

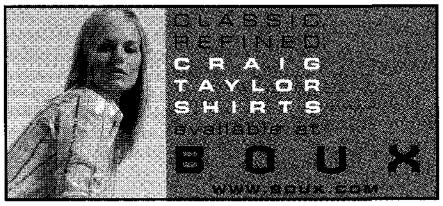
BuyerAgents

REAL ESTATE SPECIALISTS

THE BUYER'S VOICE. THE BUYER'S CHOICE.

WWW.MVBUYERAGENTS.COM

508-627-5177



CLASSIC REFINED

CRAIG TAYLOR SHIRTS

available at

BOUX

WWW.BOUX.COM

the Wall down for a week (or less). He could bivouac upstairs, set out all his toilet articles in the guest bath. I had nothing to fear from an ex-dead man. I'd tin his ears about the real-estate business, talk over the election, the Cubs, the polar ice cap, the Middle East. Though mostly I'd just stay the hell away from him, fish the Hendrickson hatch at the Red Man Club, test-drive new Lexuses, sell a house or two—whatever it took, while the two of them did what they needed to do to get that moldy old hose put away on the garage nail of the past tense.

On the twenty-third of May, Wally "the Weasel," as he was known in military school, my wife's quasi husband, father of her two maniac children, Viet vet, combat casualty, freelance amnesiac, cut-and-run artist *par excellence*, heir to a sizable North Shore fortune, meek arborist, unmourned former dead man, and big-time agent of misrule—my enemy—*this* Wally Caldwell entered my peaceful house on the Jersey Shore to work his particular dark magic on us all.

Sally became convulsively nervous, oversensitive and irritable, as the hour of Wally's arrival neared. (I affected calm to show I didn't care.) She smoked several cigarettes (the first time in twenty years), drank a double Martini at ten o'clock in the morning, changed her clothes three times, then stood out on the deck sporting stiff white sailcloth trousers, new blue French espadrilles, a blue-and-white middy blouse, and extremely dark sunglasses. All was a calculated livery betokening casual, welcoming resolution and sunny invulnerability, depicting a life so happy, invested, entitled, entrenched, comprehended, spiritual, and history-laden that Wally would take a quick peek at the whole polished array, then hop back in the cab and start the long journey back to Mull.

I will concede that the real Wally, the portly, thin-lipped, timidly smiling, gray-toothed, small-eyed, thick-fingered, suitcase-carrying bullock who struggled out of the Newark yellow cab didn't seem a vast challenge to my or anyone's sense of permanence. I had perfect no-recollection of him from forty years ago and felt strangely, warmly (wrongly) welcoming toward him, the way you'd feel about a big, softhearted pfc. in a fifties war movie who you know is going to be picked off by a Kraut sniper in the first thirty minutes. Wally had on his green, worn-smooth corduroys—though it was already summery and he was sweltering—a faded, earthy-smelling, purple cardy over a green-and-ginger rugger shirt under which his hod-carrier belly tussled for freedom. He wore heavy gray woollen socks, no hat, and the previously mentioned smelly but not mud-spackled Barbour from his days nerdling about the gorse and rank topsoil of his adopted island paradise.

He brought with him a bottle of twenty-year-old Glen Matoon and a box of Cohiba Robustos—for me. I still have them at the office and occasionally consider smoking one as a joke, though it'd probably explode. He also brought—for Sally—a strange assortment of Scottish cooking herbs he'd obviously bought for his parents at the Glasgow airport, plus a tin of shortcakes "for the house." He was at least six feet two, newly beardless, nearly bald, weighed a fair seventeen stone, and spoke English in a halting, swallowing, slightly high-pitched semi-brogue with a vocabulary straight out of the seventies U.S. He said "Chicagoland," as in "We left Chicagoland at the crack of dawn." And he said "super," as in "We had some super tickets to Wrigley." And he said "z's," as in "I copped some righteous z's on the plane." And he said "g-b," as in "I banged down a g-b"—a gut-bomb—"before we left Chicagoland, and it tasted super."

He was, this once-dead Wally, not the strangest concoction of *Homo sapiens* genetic material ever presented to me, but he was certainly the most complexly pathetic and ill-starred—a wide-eyed, positive-outlook type, ill at ease and conspicuous in his lumpy flesh, but also strangely serene and on occasion pompous and ribald, like the downstate S.A.E. he was back when life was simpler. How he made it on Mull is a mystery.

Needless to say, I loathed him (warm feelings aside), couldn't comprehend how anybody who could love me could ever have loved Wally, and wanted him out of the house the second he was in it. We shook hands limply, in the manner of a cold prisoner exchange on the Potsdam ridge. I spoke tersely, idiotically:

"Welcome to Sea-Clift, and to our home," which I didn't mean. He said something about how ". . . whole layout's . . . super," and he was "chuffed" to be here.

Wally was in my house in Sea-Clift for five uncomfortable days. I tried to go about my diurnal duties, spending time early to late in the office, where I had summer renters arriving, plumbers and carpenters and cleaning crews and yard-maintenance personnel to dispatch and lightly supervise. I sold a house on the bay side of Sea-Clift, took a bid on but failed to sell another. Normally I'd have been home for lunch, but in grudging deference to what was going on in my house I ate glutinous woodsman's casserole, Welsh rarebit, and ham and green beans at the Commodore's table at the Yacht Club, where I'm a "non-boating" member.

"I'm turning into my mother."

• •

Each evening I went home, tired and ready for a rewarding cocktail and supper and an early-to-bed. Wally was most times in the living room reading *Time* magazine, or on the deck with my binoculars, or in the kitchen loading up a Dagwood, or outside having a disapproving look at the arborvitae and hydrangeas or staring up at the shorebirds. Sally was almost never in sight when Wally was, leaving the impression that whatever they were carrying on between them during the day and my absence—hugging, face-slapping, laughing that ended in tears—was all pretty trying, and I wouldn't have liked seeing her face then, and in any case she needed to recover from it.

I certainly didn't know what the hell any of us were doing—though who would? If you'd told me that the two of them never so much as spoke, or that they went for polka lessons, or read the I Ching together, or shot heroin, I'd have had to believe it. Was it, I wondered, that everything was just too awkward, too revealing, too anxious-making, too upsetting, too embarrassing, too intimidating, too intrusive, or just too private to exhibit in front of me—the husband, the patient householder, the rate-payer, the sandwich-bread buyer? And also now a stranger?

In bed each night, with Sally returned, though asleep when her head hit the pillow, I lay awake and listened to Wally's human noises across the hall in "his" room. He played the radio—not loud—tuned to an all-news station that occasionally made him chuckle. He took long forceful pisses into his toilet to let off the lager he drank at dinner. He produced a cannonade of burps, followed by a word of demure apology to no one: "Oh, goodness, who let that go?" He walked around heavily in his sock feet, yawned with a high-pitched keening sound that only a man used to living alone ever makes. He did some sort of brief grunting calisthenics, presumably on the floor, then plopped into bed and set up an amazing lion's den of snarfling-snoring that forced me to flatten my head between pillows, so that I woke up in the morning with both hands numb as death, my eyes smarting, and my neck sore.

During the five days of Wally's visit, I twice asked Sally how things were going. The first time—this was two seconds before she fell into sleep, leaving me in bed listening to stertorous Wally—she said, "Fine. I'm glad I'm doing this. You're magnificent to put up with it. I'm sorry I'm cranky . . . zzzzzzz." Magnificent. She had never before referred to me as magnificent, even in my best early days.

The other time, we were seated, facing across the circular glass-topped breakfast table. Wally was still upstairs sawing logs. I was heading off to the Realty-Wise office. It was Day Three. We hadn't said much about anything in the daylight. To freshen the air, I said, "You're not going to leave me for Wally, are you?" I gave her a big, smirking grin and stood up, napkin in hand. To which she answered, looking up, plainly dismayed, "I don't think so." Then she looked out at the ocean, on which a white boat full of day fishermen sat anchored a quarter mile offshore, their short poles bristling off one side, their boat tipped, all happy anglers, hearts set on a flounder or a shark. They were probably Japanese. Something she noticed when she saw them may have offered solace.

But. *I don't think so*? No grateful smile, no wink, no rum mouth pulled to signal no worries, no way, no dice. *I don't think so* was not an answer Ann Landers would've considered insignificant. "Dear Franky in the Garden State, I'd lock up the silverware if I were you, boy-o. You've got a rough intruder in your midst. You need to do some nighttime sentry duty on your marriage bed. Condition red, Fred."

Wally gave no evidence of thinking himself a rough intruder or a devious conniver after my happiness. In spite of his strange splintered, half North Shore-fatty, half earnest-blinking-Scots-gardener persona (a veteran stage actor playing Falstaff with an Alabama accent), Wally did his seeming best to spend his days in a manner that did least harm. He always smiled when he saw me. He occasionally wanted to talk about beach erosion. He advised me to put more aluminum sulfate on my hydrangeas to make the color last. Otherwise, he stayed out of sight much of the time. And I now believe, though no one's told me, that Sally had actually forced him to come: to make him suffer penance, to show him that abandonment had worked out well for her, to embarrass the shit out of him, to confuse him, to make him miss her miserably, make me seem his superior, plus darker reasons that I assume are involved in almost everything we do and that there's no use thinking about.

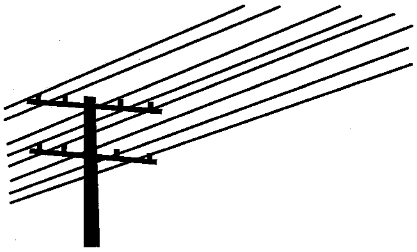
But what else was she supposed to do? How else to address the past and loss? Was there an approved mechanism for redressing such an affront besides blunt instinct? What other kind of synergy reconciles a loss so great—and so weird? It's true I might've approached it differently. But sometimes you just have to wing it.

Wally and I never talked about "the absence" (which Sally said was his name for being gone for thirty years) or anything related to their kids, his parents, his other life and lives (though, of course, he and Sally might've). We never talked about when he might be leaving or how he was experiencing life in my house. Never talked about the future—his or Sally's or mine. We never talked about the Presidential election, since that had a root system that could lead to sensitive subjects—morality, dubious ethics, uncertain outcomes, and also plainly bad outcomes. I wanted to keep it clear that he was never for one instant welcome in my house, and that I pervasively did not like him. I don't know what he thought or how he truly felt; I only know how he *was* in his conduct, which wasn't that bad and, in fact, evidenced a small, unformed nobility, although heavy-bellied and gooberish. I did my best. And maybe he did his.

Wally departed on the morning of Day Five. Sally said that he was going, and I made it my business to get the hell out of the house at daybreak. I hung around the office the rest of the morning, catching cold calls and running credit checks on new rental clients.

Then I drove home, where Sally kissed me and hugged me when I walked in the door as if I'd been away on a long journey. She looked pale and drained—not like somebody who'd been crying but like somebody who might've been on a roadside when two speeding cars or two train engines or two jet airplanes collided in front of her. She said that she was sorry about the whole week, that she knew it had taken a toll on all of us, but probably mostly me (which wasn't true), that Wally would never again come into the house, even though he'd asked her to thank me for letting him "visit," and even though having him here, as awful as it was, had served some "very positive purposes" that would never have gotten served any other way. She said that she loved me and that she wanted to make love right then, in the living room on the suède couch where this had all started. But because the meter reader knocked at the front door and the neighbor's dog started barking at him out in the road, we moved—naked as two bushmen—up to the bedroom.

Next day, I assumed—believed—matters would begin shifting back toward normal. I wanted us to drive over to the Red Man Club for an outing of fishing and fiddlehead hunting, and a trek along the Pequest to seek out the Sampson's-warbler pairs that nest in our woods and nowhere else in New Jersey. I intended to put in an order for a new Lexus at Sea Girt Imports—a surprise for Sally's birthday, in three weeks. I'd already made a trip up to consult color charts and take a test-drive.



Sally, however, stayed in bed all day, as if she herself had been on a long and arduous journey. While she rested, I drove myself over to the movie theatre at the Ocean County Mall and saw "Charlie's Angels," then bought lobsters on the way home and cooked them for dinner—though Sally barely rallied to work on hers, while I demolished mine.

She went to bed early again—after I asked if maybe she should call Dr. Blumberg on Monday and schedule a workup. Maybe she was anemic. She said she would, then went to sleep at nine and slept twelve hours, emerging downstairs into the kitchen Sunday morning, weak-eyed, sallow, and sunk-shouldered—where I was eating a pink grapefruit—to tell me that she was leaving me to live with Wally on Mull, and that she'd decided it was worse to let someone you love be alone forever than to be with someone (me!) who didn't need her all that much, even though she knew I loved her and she loved me. To this day I don't understand this calculus, though it has a lot in common with other things people do.

She was wearing an old-fashioned lilac sateen peignoir set with pink ribbonry stitched around the jacket collar. She was thin-armed, bare-legged, her skin wan and blotchy from sleep, her eyes colorless in their glacial blue. She was barefoot, a sign of primal resolution. She blinked at me as if sending me a message in Morse code: goodbye, goodbye, goodbye.

Oh, I protested. May it not be said that I failed of ardor at that crucial moment. (The past, critics have attested, seems settled and melancholy, but I was boisterous in that present.) I was by turns disbelieving, shocked, angry, tricked-feeling, humiliated, gullible, and stupid. I became analytical, accusatory, revisionist, self-justifying, self-abnegating, and inventive of better scenarios than being abandoned. Patiently (I wasn't truly patient; I wanted to slit Wally open like a bulgy feed sack) and lovingly (which I surely was), I testified that I needed her the way hydrogen needs oxygen—she should know that, had known it for years. If she needed time—with Wally, on Mull—I could understand. She should go there and do that. Hang out.

Plant little trees in little holes. Go native. Act married. Talk, slap, hug, giggle, groan, cry.

But come home!

I'd tear down conventional boundaries if we could just keep an understanding alive. Did I say beg? I begged. I already said I cried. To which Sally said, shoulders slack, eyes lowered, slender hands clasped on the tabletop, her little finger lightly touching the covered Quimper butter dish she at one time had felt great affection for, and that I subsequently winged across the room to death by smithereens, "I think I have to make this permanent, sweetheart. Even if I regret it and later come crying to you, and you're with some other woman, and won't talk to me, and my life is lost. I have to."

Strange grasp on "permanent," I thought, though my eyes burbled with tears. "It's not like we're dealing with hard kernels of truth here," I said pitiably. "This is all pretty discretionary, if you ask me."

"No," she said, which is when she took her wedding ring off and laid it on the glass pane of the tabletop, causing a hard little *tap* I'll never, ever forget, even if she comes back.

"This is so terrible," I said, in full cry. I wanted to howl like a dog.

"I know."

"Do you love Wally more than you love me?"

She shook her head in a way that made her face appear famished and exhausted, though she couldn't look at me, just at the ring she'd a moment before relinquished. "I don't know that I love him at all."

"Then what the fuck!" I shouted. "Can you just *do* this?"

"I don't think I can't do it," Sally—my wife—said.

And essentially that was that. Double negative makes a positive.

She was gone by cocktail hour, which I observed alone.

Somewhere once I read that harsh words are all alike. You can make them up and be right. The same is true of explanations. I never caught them smooching. Probably they didn't smooch. Neither did they stop midsentence in an intimate moment just when I strode through a door. (I never strode through any without whistling a happy tune first.) Sally and I never visited a counsellor to hash out problems, or endured any serious arguments. There wasn't time before she left. Apart from when I first knew Sally, Wally had never been a feature of our daily converse. Everybody has their casualties; we get used to them like old photographs we glance at but keep in a trunk.

My personal view is that Sally got caught unawares in the great, deep, and confusing eddy of contingency, which has other contingency streams running into it, some visible, some too deep-coursing for us to know about. That she began, in spite of what she might've said, to fear permanence, to fear no longer becoming, to dread a life that couldn't be trashed and squandered. Put simply, she was unprepared to be like me—which is a natural state that marriage ought to accommodate and make survivable. Heavy-footed, unnuanced, burping, yerping Wally may have reminded Sally that she had unfinished business in the last century and couldn't reason it away in the jolly manner in which I'd reasoned myself into a late-in-life marriage and lived happily by its easy-does-it house rules. First marriages have too much past clanking along behind them; but second ones may have too little, and thus lack ballast. And so it's good odds that Sally had no choice but to hand me her wedding ring like a layaway clerk at Zales and push herself out of the eddy of our life and take the current wherever it led.

I'll admit that I'm no longer so blue about Sally's absence as once I was. I don't feature myself living alone forever, just as I wouldn't concede to staying a Realtor forever, and mostly tend to think of life itself as a made-up thing composed of today, maybe tomorrow, and probably not the next day, with as little of the past added in as possible. I feel, in fact, a goodly tincture of regret for Sally. Because even though I believe that her sojourn on Mull will not last so long, by rechoosing Wally she has embraced the impossible, inaccessible past, and by doing so has risked or even exhausted an extremely useful longing—possibly her most important one, the one she's made good use of all these years to fuel her present, where I found a place. This is why the dead should stay dead and why in time the land lies smooth all around them. ♦

Barnes & Noble Classics

Rediscover the books you always meant to read.

THE ENCHANTED CASTLE *and* FIVE CHILDREN *and* IT
Edith Nesbit

Barnes & Noble Classics
Nearly 200 titles now available with new introductions and new scholarship.
www.bn.com/classics

"OUR CUSTOMERS APPRECIATE QUALITY AND ATTENTION TO DETAIL, THE NEW YORKER AUDIENCE IS A NATURAL FIT."
–WES WEAVER, John Christian Designers & Craftsmen

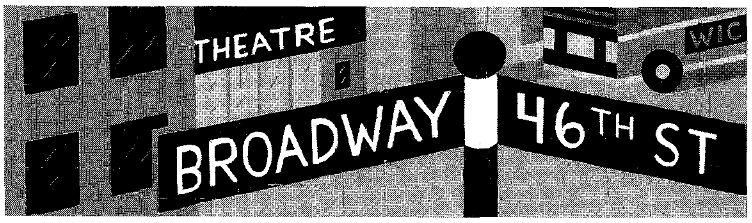
To advertise in The New Yorker, call toll free 877-843-6967

TIMESHARES 60-80% off Retail!
★ Best Resorts, Prices &Weeks
★ 500+ Worldwide Resorts!
★ Call For FREE Catalog
Buy Direct! (800) 348-0094
holidaygroup.com/save

Get Away from the city Rat Race!
For Sale
Country House & Property in Maine
Near Sugarloaf skiing
www.mainevictorianhouse4sale.com

100% COTTON
Corduroy Sport Coat
Suede Elbow Patches
All Sizes. Tan. $185.00
Hunter and Coggins
1-800-343-9396
hunterandcoggins.com

THE CRITICS



BOOKS

UPPIE REDUX?

Upton Sinclair's losses and triumphs.

BY DAVID DENBY

A hundred years ago, Upton Sinclair, the muckraker and socialist, brought out "The Jungle," a sensationally grim exposé of the noisome squalors and dangers of the meatpacking industry. Dedicated to "the workingmen of America," the book became an overnight best-seller. At the White House, Theodore Roosevelt, who had watched soldiers die from eating rotten meat during the Spanish-American War, wrote a three-page appreciation and critique of the novel, and sent it to Sinclair with an invitation to visit him. (Those were the days.) "The Jungle" played a major role in pushing forward the Pure Food and Drug Act, which Roosevelt had long favored, and which was passed in June of 1906, marking a major expansion of federal regulatory power. The book's influence hit the dinner table as well: after a couple of years, meat consumption declined, and it was widely believed that Sinclair's book was the cause. By common consent among literary historians, only one American novel, before or since—Harriet Beecher Stowe's "Uncle Tom's Cabin"—has had so powerful an influence on practical affairs.

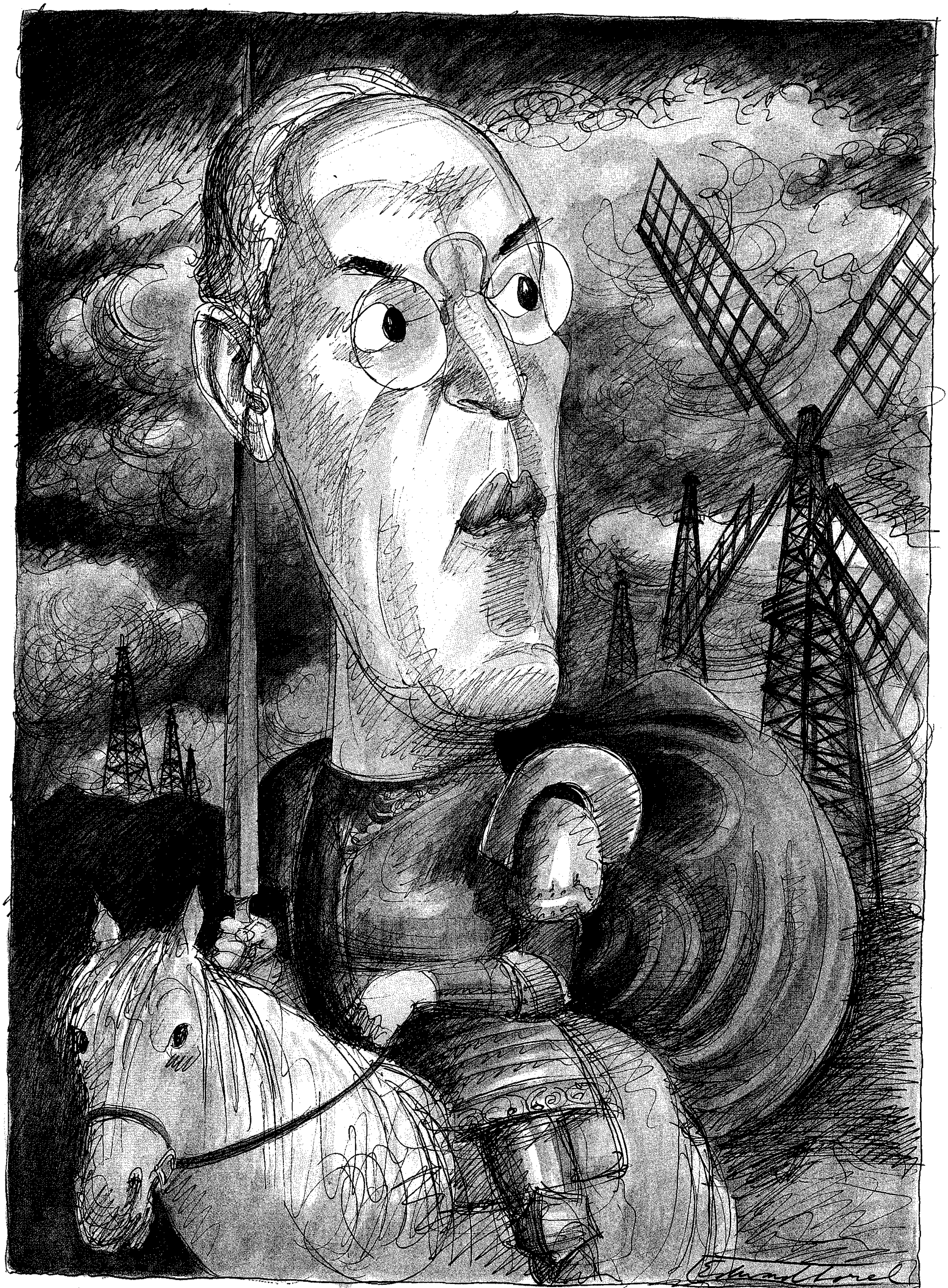
In 1906, Upton Sinclair was twenty-seven years old; he continued publishing for more than sixty years, a clattering typewriter that would not stop. No two scholars seem to agree on exactly how many books he wrote, but the number is above ninety, and his output, in addition to social-protest and historical novels, includes plays, screenplays, tracts, journalistic exposés, didactic dialogues, instructional manuals, and autobiographies. Sinclair spoke at rallies, joined strikes and protests, and repeatedly ran for political office; he sponsored Sergei Eisenstein's epic unfinished documentary about Mexican Indians, "Que Viva México." Ezra Pound, who knew a thing or two about obsession, said that Sinclair was not a maniac but a "polymaniac." During many periods of his life, Sinclair's activities were widely discussed in the press, and in the eyes of some prominent contemporaries, including Albert Einstein, Thomas Mann, and Bernard Shaw, he was an invaluable guide to twentieth-century politics. To many people, however, he now seems remote and musty—the author of flaking volumes encountered in country book barns. Apart from "The Jungle," Sinclair's works have been largely forgotten, or perhaps simply mislaid, his name confused with that of Sinclair Lewis, the author of "Main Street," "Babbitt," and "Dodsworth."

Can anything in Sinclair's life and work still make a claim on us? At the moment, he's getting some of his old notice. Paul Thomas Anderson, the director of "Boogie Nights" and "Magnolia," is adapting Sinclair's novel "Oil!" into a movie starring Daniel Day Lewis and titled "There Will Be Blood" (with luck, the title will be changed again). The novelist Chris Bachelder recently brought out a fantasia, "U.S.!," in which Sinclair, resurrected by diehard leftists, writes one terrible novel after another and is repeatedly slain by reactionaries—a bizarrely masochistic scheme that nevertheless catches Sinclair's jack-in-the-box energy. Reading two new biographies of Sinclair—one intimate and intellectually astute, "Radical Innocent: Upton Sinclair," by Anthony Arthur (Random House; $27.95), and one political and anecdotal, "Upton Sinclair and the Other American Century," by Kevin Mattson (John Wiley & Sons; $25.95)—leaves one bewildered by the contradictory nature of his enthusiasms, and by the mixture of prescience and credulity in his temperament. What fuses these qualities, one finally realizes, is his dedication to an ethical notion of being an American. He was one of those professional citizens—like William Jennings Bryan or H. L. Mencken or I. F. Stone—who took responsibility for the soul of the country but never (except for Bryan, briefly) held power. Through the years of America's century-long triumph, Sinclair was always mocking or scolding or keening for some unachievable national paradise. If he no longer seems original, it may be because he anticipated both our reforming high-mindedness and so many of our follies.

Sinclair was born in Baltimore in 1878, the son of a genteel and puritanical Southern woman and an alcoholic liquor salesman descended from a naval family. The combination of his mother's distaste for indulgence and his father's habit of lingering in bars—the young Upton was frequently dispatched to bring him home—appears to have left him with lifelong habits of industry and a sense of disgust for any behavior that suggested weakness. Moving to New York in 1888, the Sinclairs boarded at a residence hotel filled with other down-on-their-luck Southern families. Sinclair didn't waste much time at home; he entered City College at the age of thirteen and then transferred, as an eighteen-year-old graduate student, to Columbia, where he was generally bored in the classroom and spent his time writing stories and jokes for the pulp magazines published downtown. By the time he was nineteen, he was composing pseudonymous hack novels about the debonair adventures of West Point and Annapolis cadets. With the help of two stenographers, he churned out eight thousand words a day.

Although he was eager for fame his entire life, Sinclair also gave way to a periodic desire to live in a log cabin or, even

EDWARD SOREL


Edward Sorel

Upton Sinclair: novelist, muckraker, socialist, utopian, pamphleteer, film producer, candidate, homeopath, fad dieter.

better, a tent, and at the age of twenty-one, announcing to his friends that he was going to devote himself to art, he moved to a cabin near Lake Massawippi, in Quebec. There he subsisted on berries and nuts while nurturing prolonged ecstasies fuelled by nature walks and by literature, especially the poetry of Shelley. After foraging by himself for a while, he married the sensual and (by all accounts) neurotic beauty Meta Fuller, another Southerner from a fallen family. He took her to another cabin in the woods, near Princeton, New Jersey, lectured her on philosophy and poetry, but made love to her only now and again. Sinclair seems to have felt a considerable antipathy toward sexual love. He warned Meta and himself against indulgence, and, in a fictional portrait of his marriage, "Love's Pilgrimage," published in 1911, he describes sex as a marriage duty in which "the body and soul . . . were wrung and squeezed dry like a sponge."

Sinclair's early novels were insufferably high-minded and were generally ignored. He needed to create interest in himself somehow. In 1902, he secretly placed an obituary in the *Times* announcing the suicide by drowning of a twenty-two-year-old "poet and man of genius" named Arthur Stirling. The following year, a book purporting to be Stirling's journal appeared in print. The journal lamented the obscurity of the artist in a materialist society: "To have a heart as hot as the wild bird's, and wings as eager—and to be chained here in this seething hell of selfishness, this orgy of folly," and so forth. Caught out by a reporter, Sinclair and his publisher revealed the hoax, and he got some sales and the desired public notice, but his notion of art was hopelessly maudlin. Reading all that Shelley, it turned out, was not good for his style.

SECRECY

Secrecy flows through you,
a different kind of blood.
It's as if you've eaten it
like a bad candy,
taken it into your mouth,
let it melt sweetly on your tongue,
then allowed it to slide down your throat
like the reverse of uttering,
a word dissolved
into its glottals and sibilants,
a slow intake of breath—

And now it's in you, secrecy.
Ancient and vicious, luscious
as dark velvet.
It blooms in you,
a poppy made of ink.

You can think of nothing else.
Once you have it, you want more.
What power it gives you!
Power of knowing without being known,
power of the stone door,
power of the iron veil,
power of the crushed fingers,
power of the drowned bones
crying out from the bottom of the well.

—*Margaret Atwood*

Other novels soon followed the dead-poet caper, but Sinclair clearly required a cause beyond "art." The period of the eighteen-nineties, just before Sinclair's fumbling rise to authorship, was marked by an expansion of mass-circulation newspapers and magazines and by the wresting of American literary culture from the grip of what Ann Douglas has called "feminization"—the alliance between ministers and genteel women writing sentimental fiction. Ida Tarbell and Lincoln Steffens, seizing on the new reading public, produced exposés of corporate malfeasance and urban corruption. Tarbell's "The History of the Standard Oil Company," published in 1904, aided Roosevelt in his attempt to break the power of John D. Rockefeller. Such remarkable changes in the literary marketplace and in literary taste, and the influence of European novelists like Émile Zola, made "naturalism" a major literary form. Naturalist fiction in the hands of its American masters—Jack London, Frank Norris, and Theodore Dreiser—was left-wing fiction, and, whatever its intellectual failings, it rescued Sinclair from his youthful insipidities.

In February of 1904, Sinclair finished "Manassas," a long novel about slavery and the Civil War, and, as he worked on the galleys, he read Marx and Veblen. Eugene V. Debs had formed the Socialist Party of America in 1901, and, in 1904, Sinclair joined up. In those early years of the century, socialism was a kind of militant humanism; Sinclair, like many socialists of the period, believed that the scramble for profits degraded relations between people. He approached socialism "as a moralist, not as a political theorist," Anthony Arthur writes. "Both his strengths and his weaknesses derived from his simplistic belief that all injustice stemmed from greed, whether for money or power." After "Manassas" was published, in the summer of 1904, the editor of a popular socialist magazine, *The Appeal to Reason*, challenged Sinclair to write a novel about "wage slavery."

At the time, livestock was among the largest industries in the country. In Chicago, companies like Armour and Swift owned acres of yards, pens, slaughterhouses, and packing plants. The filthy conditions in such places were an open secret, but the big companies, working together (the "Beef Trust"), bribed government inspectors, and exercised enough control over the local newspapers to avoid serious censure. The unions were weak and defenseless; the companies were able to replace rebellious workers from a constantly renewed pool of Central and Eastern European immigrants. In the pages of *The Appeal to Reason,* Sinclair had implored Chicago's meat workers, after an unsuccessful strike, to continue fighting, but he did it from a distance. Now he accepted the magazine's challenge and went to Chicago. He was twenty-six, a slender, pale young man with soft lips and liquid eyes. Zealous and excitable, he suffered from nervous tension, indigestion, and headaches. Away from his demanding and unhappy wife, however (she stayed behind in the cabin), he was content. He walked all over Chicago's more dismal neighborhoods, asking questions of workers, union organizers, settlement-house officials. And for days he wandered through the vast Armour facilities in shabby clothes, lunch bucket in hand. There was very little security at the plant. No one challenged this oddly inquiring worker.

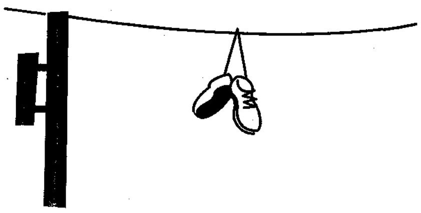
Sinclair built his narrative around a family of immigrant Lithuanians who settle in the stockyard area known as Packingtown. They have few illusions about wealth; they expect little more than employment and freedom from tsarist corruption. The broadbacked hero, Jurgis Rudkus, is a virtuous prole whose refrain, no matter what happens to him, is "I will work harder." At the stockyards, in a reverse anticipation of Henry Ford's production line, the cows are stunned with a sledgehammer, then hung up by one leg, beheaded, skinned, and so on—deconstructed as they move past one worker after another. Jurgis's job is to sweep the gutted slops into a hole in the floor, and at first he enjoys the hard, bloody labor. Within a few months, however, he is sore and disillusioned. The men are forced to perform at punishing speed; they are played off against one another by management and dismissed for any kind of rebellion or injury. The conditions, at times, are little short of torture:

> There was no heat upon the killing-beds; the men might exactly as well have worked out of doors all winter. For that matter, there was very little heat anywhere in the building, except in the cooking-rooms and such places—and it was the men who worked in these who ran the most risk of all, because whenever they had to pass to another room they had to go through ice-cold corridors, and sometimes with nothing on above the waist except a sleeveless undershirt. On the killing-beds you were apt to be covered with blood, and it would freeze solid; if you leaned against a pillar, you would freeze to that, and if you put your hand upon the blade of your knife, you would run a chance of leaving your skin on it. The men would tie up their feet in newspapers and old sacks, and these would be soaked in blood and frozen, and then soaked again, and so on, until by night-time a man would be walking on great lumps the size of the feet of an elephant.

The force of "The Jungle" can be suggested only by quoting it at length. Sinclair's prose is fluent and forward-moving, but he rarely writes an interesting phrase or discovers new weight or color in a word. He builds his effects through precise reporting and the remorseless piling up of detail; he was a master of the routines of physical labor and the gear-by-gear minutiae of industrial processes. In the meatpacking scenes, he holds his rhythm steady and lets the hideous facts do their work:

> There was never the least attention paid to what was cut up for sausage; there would come all the way back from Europe old sausage that had been rejected, and that was mouldy and white—it would be dosed with borax and glycerine, and dumped into the hoppers, and made over again for home consumption. There would be meat that had tumbled out on the floor, in the dirt and sawdust, where the workers had tramped and spit uncounted billions of consumption germs. There would be meat stored in great piles in rooms; and the water from leaky roofs would drip over it, and thousands of rats would race about on it. It was too dark in these storage places to see well, but a man could run his hand over these piles of meat and sweep off handfuls of the dried dung of rats. These rats were nuisances, and the packers would put poisoned bread out for them; they would die, and then rats, bread, and meat would go into the hoppers together.

It is the archetypal scene of industrial horror, an image that haunted the nation. If only Sinclair had possessed fiction-writing abilities equal to his ability to evoke squalor! One lurid catastrophe after another engulfs Jurgis Rudkus and his relatives—so many disasters that one suspects Sinclair outfitted the family with exactly those vulnerabilities which could be most grievously exploited by a brutal society. Jurgis is injured, loses his job, and takes to drink; his pretty young wife, who also works in the meatpacking district, is bullied by her foreman into becoming his mistress; their little boy drowns in the Packingtown muck. Jurgis breaks down, and Sinclair sends him reeling through the city, where he is brushed by "the hurrying throngs upon the streets, who were deaf to his entreaties, oblivious of his very existence—and savage and contemptuous when he forced himself upon them."



Available in many editions, "The Jungle" is still widely taught in schools and colleges. It has remained a moral text if not quite a literary one. You have only to read the first few chapters of "Germinal," Zola's 1885 novel about French coal miners, to know what it feels like to be in the hands of a sensually and morally alive writer who establishes a tight pattern of significance rather than just laying on pages of atmosphere and calamity. Any kind of inwardness was beyond Sinclair: his characters, suffering without any gain in consciousness, remain mere names attached to depressing social conditions. Jurgis falls in with criminals and corrupt politicians, and then, suddenly, at a public meeting, he's electrified by a fervent voice: "They own not merely the labor of society, they have bought the governments; and everywhere they use their raped and stolen power to intrench themselves in their privileges." The book ends with Jurgis's rapid conversion to socialism and with an outpouring of blood-raising speeches inspired by the words of Eugene Debs. The last line of the novel is "CHICAGO WILL BE OURS!"

But Chicago didn't become "ours," which was something that Sinclair had trouble understanding. The shock created by "The Jungle" was extraordinary, but it didn't produce what Sinclair had hoped for—outrage over the exploitation of workers, and the first steps toward the defeat of capitalism. "I aimed at the public's heart, and by accident I hit it in the stomach," he later said, in perhaps his sole public witticism. Roosevelt brushed off the call for socialist revolution, and though he acted vigorously on contaminated food, his measures were neither as vigorous nor as comprehensive as Sinclair wanted. The writer, hanging around Washington, pestered the President with cables and protests, until Roosevelt, losing patience, wrote to Frank Doubleday, Sinclair's publisher, "Tell Sinclair to go home and let me run the country for a while."

In the spring of 1906, at the time of the signing of the Pure Food and Drug Act, Sinclair was trying to build socialism on a small scale. His idea was that a select group of intellectuals and artists would band together and hire people to cook and clean for them and look after their children, leaving them free to work and exchange ideas. A refuge from commercial society, the enterprise was a descendant of the nineteenth-century colony Brook Farm, but without the emphasis on physical labor and schooling or the philosophical strength of Transcendentalism to hold it together. In November, 1906, Sinclair and his group jointly purchased a former boys' academy in Englewood, New Jersey, named Helicon Hall, after the mountain in Greek mythology whose rushing springs inspired the Muses. By the following March, eighty men and women (including writers, feminists, freelance philosophers) were living there, discussing Nietzsche and eating stunningly healthy dinners of beans, potatoes, turnips, prunes, and salt-free crackers known as "educators." College students swabbed the floors and tended the furnace (among them, dropping in for a laugh, was Sinclair Lewis, then a twenty-one-year-old Yale undergraduate). The New York papers, fascinated by the experiment, spoke of an atmosphere of "free love," which was probably a journalistic fantasy—Sinclair was hardly a bohemian. Helicon Hall became famous overnight and was visited by William James, Emma Goldman, and John Dewey, who joined the board of directors. In March of 1907, however, the place mysteriously went up in flames, and Sinclair lost the funds he had sunk into it, including a good chunk of his proceeds from "The Jungle."

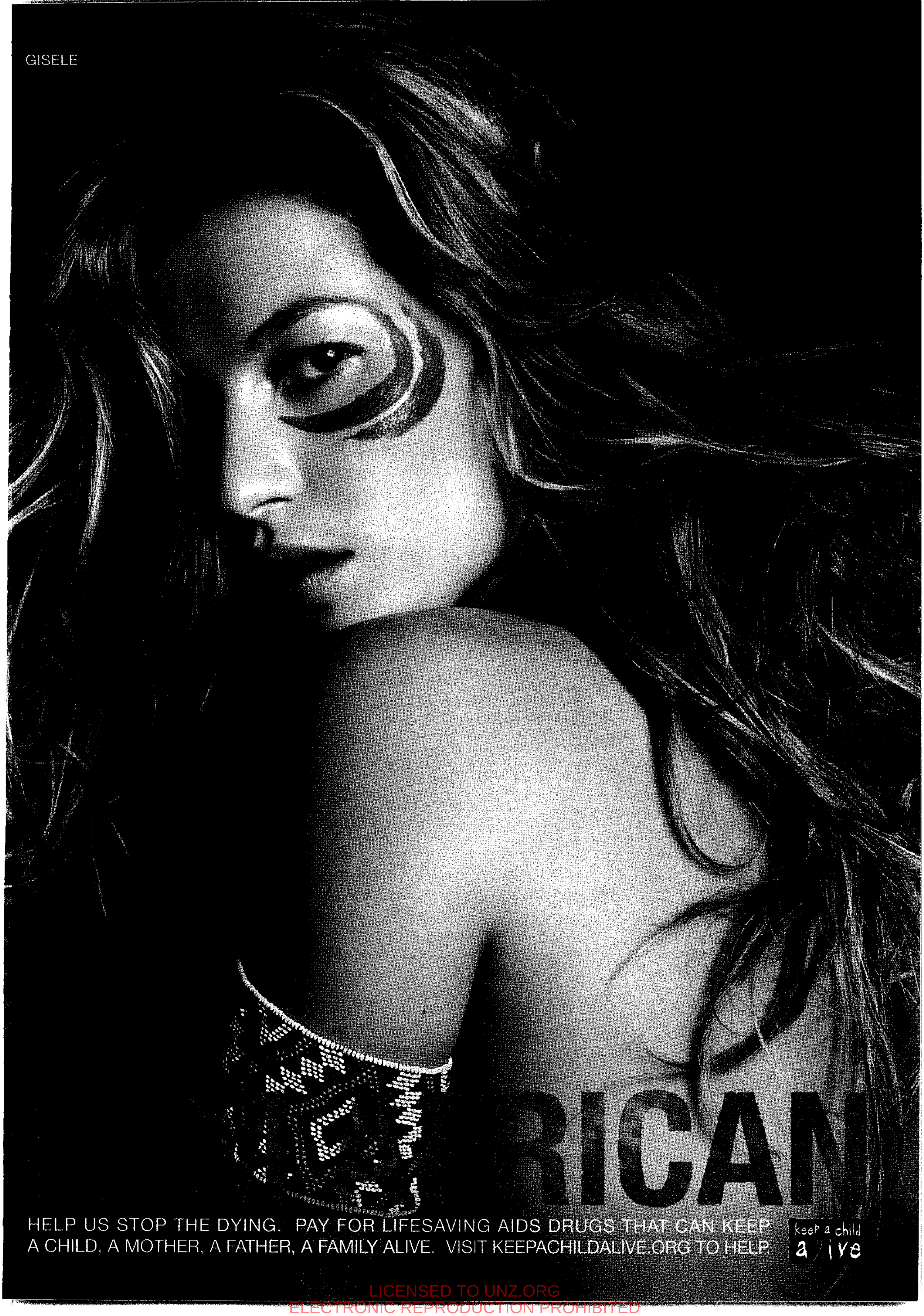
In the Helicon Hall affair, as on other occasions, Sinclair was plagued by the kind of comic misfortune that tends to befall those bent on improving themselves and others. He was skeptical of the morals of industrialists and newspaper publishers but receptive to the delusions of quacks. He had a weakness for nostrums and half-baked schemes (including his own). H. L. Mencken, with whom he had a joshing epistolary relationship for years, said of him, "He must suffer vicariously for the carnal ease of the rest of us. He must die daily that we may live in peace, corrupt and contented." This suggests a savior unable to save anyone, but failure never stopped Sinclair from preaching. In the nineteen-twenties, when other American writers were excited by Freud, Joyce, and Picasso, or by jazz, flappers, and booze, Sinclair was devoted to popular fads like dieting and homeopathy. At various times in his life, he gave himself over to programs of fasting, prolonged chewing, colonic cleansing, and other such methods of ideologically approved digestion. He practiced a kind of socialism of the body, its constituent parts rehabilitated along progressive lines—tennis for the heart and lungs, nuts and berries for the colon.

By the twenties, he had settled in with a new wife, Mary Craig Kimbrough. Meta, after years of being tormented by her abstemious husband, had taken a number of handsome young men, including Sinclair's best friend, as lovers, and Sinclair, charging Meta with "depravity," had sued her for divorce, in 1911. Kimbrough, whom he always called "Craig," was closer to him in temperament. She believed in his abilities and wanted to protect him—and she possessed a useful talent for shrewd real-estate deals. In 1916, they moved to Southern California, a land with ripening property values, a rapidly expanding economy, and a fondness for spiritualist cults. The place, then in one of its Ouija-board phases, seems to have hit the two of them hard. In Pasadena (and later Beverly Hills), they set up séances and dallied with mediums, one of whom, channelling the dead Jack London, obligingly remarked that Sinclair would be one of the few American writers still remembered in fifty years' time. In 1911, Sinclair had written a book called "The Fasting Cure," which recommended fasting as "an automatic protection against disease." In 1930, he wrote a book promoting telepathy and psychokinesis as physical skills democratically available to everyone.

He was a humorless and sententious man, obtuse in many ways, but so resourceful that he drew all sorts of people to him. He can perhaps best be understood as a product of that period in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in which rapid industrialization and America's abrupt rise to world prominence created a variety of great two-dimensional characters: Henry Ford, with his anti-Semitism; John D. Rockefeller, with his sour contempt for humanity; D. W. Griffith, with his penchant for Victorian sentimentality and racist fantasy. There was a bit of the crank in all of them, though one has to admit that crankiness, in that unfettered time, may have been part of the strength that allowed them to function so effectively. From our point of view, they understood the secrets of mechanical and industrial dominance—they were literally empowered, and in a rush—but some element of sensibility or just plain sense got lost in their swift ascension.

In temperament, the innocently arrogant Sinclair was of their number. The great difference, of course, is that they ran things, and he did not. His power was solely the power of protest. He had been thoroughly shaken by the coal miners' strike in Ludlow, Colorado, in 1914, during which the governor, at the behest of a local company owned by the Rockefellers, called out the state militia and private "detectives," who put down the strike by killing twenty miners and members of their families. He picketed the Standard Oil headquarters, in New York (John D. Rockefeller's son John D., Jr., as everyone called him, controlled the Colorado mining company), and left a furious note threatening "indictment." He was arrested, spent three days in the Tombs, and then, at a crowded meeting of the Socialist Club, gave a speech entitled "Shall We Murder Rockefeller?" His answer was no.

Anthony Arthur characterizes Sinclair's conduct in the Ludlow affair as a strange pattern of incendiary speeches followed by denunciations of violence. But Sinclair was not inconsistent about violence; he detested it, and thought it would destroy American socialism. Looking back on the disasters that political intellectuals of the left and the right fell into in the twentieth century, we may regard his virtue as both a disappointment (he lacked the imagination to become a dangerous man) and a relief; in any case, he was immune to authoritarian appeals of any kind. An instinctive American democrat, he believed in the mimeograph machine, the public meeting, and the vote. Since he was sure that the capitalists controlled what was said in the newspapers, taught in the universities, and preached by organized



HELP US STOP THE DYING. PAY FOR LIFESAVING AIDS DRUGS THAT CAN KEEP A CHILD, A MOTHER, A FATHER, A FAMILY ALIVE. VISIT KEEPACHILDALIVE.ORG TO HELP.

keep a child alive

religion (he had written a book on each institution, proving the case to his own satisfaction), it was necessarily his job, when something was wrong, to read up on the subject, visit the scene of the crime, and bring the offense to public notice. He spent three years researching and writing two long novels about the Ludlow strike.

During the strike, Sinclair described John D., Jr., as "an inoffensive and possibly likable person" who was nevertheless the representative of "predatory force." This double focus suggests an abandonment of the class-warfare melodrama that was so strong in "The Jungle." By 1927, when Sinclair came to write "Oil!"—probably his second-best book and certainly his most readable—he was ready to look at a capitalist sympathetically, though without relinquishing his judgment. In the novel, the affable California entrepreneur J. Arnold Ross buys oil-rich properties at bargain rates from unsuspecting owners and routinely corrupts local officials. Eager to expand, Ross wanders haplessly—and, in Sinclair's terms, inevitably—into bribing national officials to gain oil leases from the Navy (the incident is clearly meant to evoke the Teapot Dome Scandal). In other ways, however, Ross is a good fellow, and, as he and his teen-age son, Bunny, rampage around California together, Sinclair conveys, in extraordinary detail, the exhilaration of creating a successful business. His old talent for describing industrial work returned—no novelist has ever written better (or more) about oil derricks. But "Oil!" is a leisurely, low-intensity affair. When Sinclair isn't describing the oil business, or the struggle between owners and workers, he turns chatty, cheerful, and instructive, bringing us the news about Hollywood parties, religious revivalism, and much else in the California boom. He had become an assured middlebrow entertainer.

"Oil!" ends in 1924, with Sinclair cutting back and forth between the death of a young Communist, who has been assaulted by goons, and the news, on the radio, of Calvin Coolidge's electoral victory. Sinclair treats the Harding and Coolidge Presidencies as put-up jobs engineered by a cabal of big-money interests. He was obsessed with the "purchase of government," as he called it, and, in California, he had run for office himself—for Congress in 1920, the U.S. Senate in 1922, and the governorship in 1926 and 1930—on the American Socialist Party ticket. It was his hope to conduct an honest campaign while acquainting the electorate with the basics of socialism, but "Uppie," as the press called him, never won more than forty-five thousand votes.

By 1933, the boom had been killed by the Depression; some half a million people were out of work in the state. Sinclair was encouraged by the first hundred days of the New Deal, but he wanted to push Franklin D. Roosevelt further to the left. He ran for governor again, this time on the Democratic ticket, capturing the Party's nomination with an astonishingly peppy grassroots campaign. The candidacy was built around the rubric EPIC—End Poverty in California. On August 29, 1934, the day after winning the nomination, he explained the plan:

> There are a couple of thousand factories in our state standing entirely idle and the rest are working less than half the time. Many of these concerns are running into debt, and to them the state of California will say, "We offer to rent your factories. Keep your organization going, call in your workers, and run your machinery under the supervision of the state." The workers will turn out goods and they will own what they have produced. The farmers of California, meanwhile, are producing huge quantities of foodstuffs for which they cannot find a market. The farmers are losing their land because they cannot pay their taxes. To these farmers the state will say, "Bring your foodstuffs to our warehouses and you will receive in return receipts which will be good for your taxes." The farmers will eagerly comply and the food will be shipped to the cities and made available to the factory workers in exchange for the products of *their* labor.

In the end, everyone would join in a giant co-operative. It was the socialist moment in American electoral politics. Debs had won more than nine hundred thousand votes in 1920, but that was in a Presidential election. This was an election that, along with some mayoralty races, a socialist might actually win.

Speaking without notes in a reedy but clear voice, Sinclair explained to farmers and workers notions that, during the Depression, seemed far more pressing than they might have ten years earlier. His concern for social justice was obviously on the level—no one imagined that he was merely out for himself—and the campaign attracted an enormous number of young volunteers, two of whom, Jerry Voorhis and Helen Gahagan Douglas, later held congressional seats, only to run into Richard Nixon's smears in the late forties. But the candidacy, however popular, was doomed. The industrialists, bankers, oilmen, churches, and other wealthy groups he had attacked for decades were appalled, and they united against him, hiring a phalanx of advertising and public-relations men. He lacked the support of a single daily newspaper in California (with the Los Angeles *Times* especially virulent in its opposition), which wasn't surprising, since he thought that newspapers and radio stations should be run on a nonprofit basis. In Hollywood, James Cagney and Charlie Chaplin supported him, but the studio bosses were outraged by his candidacy. At M-G-M, Irving Thalberg, who loathed Sinclair (the studio had unsuccessfully adapted "The Wet Parade," a novel of Sinclair's advocating Prohibition, in 1932), went to work. He concocted phony newsreels and had them distributed to theatres all over the state. In one, bands of scruffy "hoboes" were shown getting off a train in California, eager to enjoy the benefits of a possible Sinclair victory. In another, a dolorous-looking bearded immigrant said that since Sinclair's system "vorked vell in Russia, vy can't it vork here?" The most serious blow came from Franklin Roosevelt, who, though he had seemed congenial at first, wanted to protect New Deal legislation from association with radicals, and pulled away from an endorsement. Yet, despite the concerted opposition, Sinclair received eight hundred and eighty thousand votes—about two hundred and sixty thousand fewer than the nondescript Republican candidate, Frank Merriam, but by far the most ever amassed in a statewide election by a candidate with a radical program. The campaign quickly passed into legend and has remained there. Historians now regard the opposition to Sinclair as the first modern media campaign—the methods came to be used to destroy a candidate vulnerable in any way at all.

After his defeat, Sinclair, unable to turn off the motor, immediately wrote two books about the campaign, but, through the rest of the thirties, he stayed out of politics and wrote fiction, culminating in "World's End," a best-seller published in 1940 that became the first installment of an eleven-volume, two-million-word popular epic. Sinclair fed his hero, Lanny Budd, a European-born

American spy, diplomat, and lover, into the Versailles Treaty negotiations, the Weimar Republic, the rise of Fascism, and just about everything else that happened in Europe and America. The Budd series was disdained by American literary intellectuals, but it prospered as an easy course in modern history for young people. By the forties, Sinclair the fiction writer had become the precursor not of a serious left-wing novelist like E. L. Doctorow but of James Michener, Herman Wouk, Howard Fast, and other well-paid authors who did their homework and spun out historical tales at satisfyingly interminable length. Devoted to his wife, who was often ill, Sinclair lived in California as a semi-recluse through the forties and fifties. When John F. Kennedy was elected President, groups of idealistic students rediscovered Sinclair, and he became, during Kennedy's term and Lyndon Johnson's, an active campus speaker—the old troublemaker, born thirteen years after the end of the Civil War, entertaining students in their "tight-fitting blue denim pants and long hair." He died in November, 1968, at the age of ninety. All that faddish dieting had kept him alive into the Age of Aquarius.

Most of Sinclair's fiction no doubt deserves to molder in the book barn. But the influence of "The Jungle" may still be seen in investigative journalism and in such books as Susan Sheehan's "A Welfare Mother" and Jonathan Kozol's "Rachel and Her Children," which use the resources of fiction to chronicle the lives of people who have dropped to the bottom of American society. Sinclair's ideas didn't go away, either. The union hall may be nearly empty, but his desire for an alternative world within American capitalism has borne fruit in such nonprofit organizations as food co-operatives, day-care centers, and public radio and television. His personal habits of non-stop opinionizing and self-serving rant find their natural heir in the blog. His austere citizenly dedication inspired the young Ralph Nader, who has acknowledged the debt. His obsession with health and physical culture prefigured our own. He was one of the great American squares, exasperating and tone-deaf his entire life. But an ethical man tugs at us from the grave more persistently than merely successful men, who have gone to a quieter form of rest. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

Special Topics in Calamity Physics, *by Marisha Pessl (Viking; $25.95).* The first hundred pages of this wildly idiosyncratic début novel are a blizzard of obscure bibliographical references, apocrypha, Capitalized Words of Import, and nouns coerced into being verbs (a pen is not twirled but "triple-lutzed"). If the author seems overexuberant, her pyrotechnics nonetheless suit her narrator, a hyper-literate teen-ager named Blue van Meer, the daughter of a lady-killing professor and (shades of Nabokov) an amateur lepidopterist who died young. Blue chronicles her senior year in high school, when she is Svengalied by a clique of louche, privileged kids, united in their obsession with a mysterious film teacher. "Everyone is responsible for the page-turning tempo of his or her Life Story," Blue's father warns her. She takes his words to heart, and her mesmeric tale, even at its most over-the-top, feels true to the operatic agonies of adolescence.

The Whistling Season, *by Ivan Doig (Harcourt; $25).* Set in 1909 in rural Montana, this evocative novel records, in measured bursts of illumination, what happens when Oliver Milliron, the widowed father of three boys and in need of a housekeeper, answers an ad placed by Rose Llewellyn, a charmer whose claim "Can't Cook But Doesn't Bite" proves true. Her erudite brother Morris, along for the ride, takes over the local schoolhouse and animates it with passionate teaching. Doig offers a gentle appreciation of the secrets beneath the surface of everyday life, set against a Western landscape that is described in concrete detail: a field is ready for plowing "when you can't see the frost on the ground by the light of the first full moon after the equinox"; a mixture of snow and dirt is called "snirt."

The Wonga Coup, *by Adam Roberts (PublicAffairs; $26).* In March, 2004, Simon Mann, an Eton-educated former S.A.S. officer, was arrested in Zimbabwe after trying to load five tons of automatic weapons and rocket-propelled grenades onto a plane carrying mercenaries. Mann was about to fly to Equatorial Guinea, a tiny, derelict former Spanish colony that is now the third-largest oil exporter in sub-Saharan Africa. His plan was to depose the country's dictator, Obiang Nguema, and replace him with his rival Severo Moto, an exiled priest living in Madrid. In return, Mann expected to receive a large "splodge of wonga" (schoolboy slang for a wad of money) and millions more in government contracts. Roberts's account dutifully traces the paper trail of this "rent-a-coup," which implicated associates including the son of Margaret Thatcher. He also offers a sharp portrait of modern mercenary culture, whose members are "as familiar with company law, bank transfers and investor agreements as with the workings of a Browning pistol." Mann's plan, Roberts notes, was modelled on Frederick Forsyth's 1974 novel "The Dogs of War," itself a fictional version of an earlier plot.

The Human Voice, *by Anne Karpf (Bloomsbury; $24.95).* Karpf, a British journalist, notes that, while speakers of Tzeltal, in Mexico, have more than four hundred words describing such vocal traits as "talking very slowly, as if sad," English has a comparatively small number of such terms. Believing that this indicates considerable indifference to vocal matters in Western culture, Karpf presents an omnium-gatherum of data from every science that has ever bumped into the vocal cords. Karpf's study lacks focus but includes provocative insights, including the speculation that Al Gore and John Kerry have both been hampered by "a lack of vocal charisma." The most fascinating chapters show how infant development is voice-guided, and the importance of voice in gender politics: over the past fifty years, women's voices have been getting lower, apparently because "women who talk like men gain in status, but men who talk like women risk ridicule."

THE SKY LINE

MILE-HIGH

After the World Trade Center furor, Daniel Libeskind moves on.

BY PAUL GOLDBERGER

Daniel Libeskind's architectural career has had an unusual trajectory. He went from being a theoretician whose highly academic designs were so obscure that most people couldn't understand them to being a celebrity architect whose work is dismissed by many of his peers as too crowd-pleasing. The transformation began with the Jewish Museum in Berlin, which he designed less as a home for artifacts than as a de-facto Holocaust memorial, using architecture to produce a sense of discomfort. The building, which opened in 2001, drew well over half a million visitors a year, and Libeskind discovered the allure of popular acclaim. When he won the competition to design a master plan for the reconstruction of the site of the World Trade Center, in 2003, he cloaked his familiar angular shapes in patriotic rhetoric. But, as reconstruction has moved forward, his plan has been compromised almost out of existence, and his continued attempts to claim ownership of the project have sometimes made him a figure of fun in the press. All the buildings at Ground Zero have been assigned to other architects, and very few of Libeskind's ideas will be visible.

In Denver, however, Libeskind's ideas are becoming very visible indeed. His new building for the Denver Art Museum, which opens this fall, is his first American work to be completed. It's already so popular in Denver that Libeskind was invited to construct a pair of condominium buildings and a hotel next door, and to design a neighborhood plan for a "cultural district" surrounding the museum. Marketed as the creations of "world renowned architect Daniel Libeskind"—whose face is all over the brochures—the apartments are among the highest-priced condos in town. Such success is a reminder of the fact that second-tier American cities have often proved more willing to take architectural risks than supposedly sophisticated cities like New York. In giving Libeskind the freedom denied him in New York, Denver is taking a risk: Does Libeskind have the ability to design a building that will exert the magnetic pull of an icon and still work well as a museum? And can he set out a plan for an entire neighborhood, as he tried to do in New York? Libeskind's new Denver Art Museum is an eruption of hard-edged rhomboids that suggests gargantuan quartz crystals. This is a bold building, and it is neither an inaccessible theoretical work nor a brazen piece of entertainment, but somewhere in between.

The building, officially called the Frederic C. Hamilton Building, is technically an addition to an eccentric structure by Gio Ponti, an Italian architect best known for designing the Pirelli Tower, in Milan. Ponti's museum is a forbidding, fortress-like block, clad in a million triangular tiles of reflective gray glass, with what looks like castellation along the top. The only Ponti design that ever got built in America, it's an earlier example of Denver's adventurousness, but when it opened, in 1971, not everyone was pleased: it was described as "an Italian castle wrapped in aluminum foil." Ponti's building is an all but impossible structure to add to, so Libeskind didn't really try. He just did his own thing next door, juxtaposing his crystalline forms with Ponti's sternly rectilinear style. The two buildings are connected by a glass-covered bridge across the street that separates them. The bridge itself is somewhat perfunctory, but above it Libeskind daringly extends one triangle of the building over the road like the prow of a ship. An origami fold, blown up to monumental scale, the prow is a powerful gesture: its point seems aimed directly at Ponti's building, a colossal siege engine set to storm the castle.

The Libeskind addition is sheathed in more than nine thousand titanium panels, which are not completely flat, so that as the light bounces off them they seem to ripple gently, as if the building were covered with a thin film of liquid. Since none of the exterior walls are perpendicular to the ground and each surface slopes at a different angle, at any moment the sun strikes each of them differently, making some sections seem richly textured while others appear to have no texture at all.

As a purely sculptural feat, this building is a thrilling affirmation of the idea that museums can be art works as well as merely containers. It is also willful and arbitrary, and wildly self-indulgent. Some people will praise Libeskind for creating the most exciting place in downtown Denver since the exuberant Gilded Age atrium in the lobby of the Brown Palace Hotel, and others will denounce him for creating a building that appears to put an architect's love of certain shapes above any commitment to the functions that a museum is supposed to serve. They will both be right.

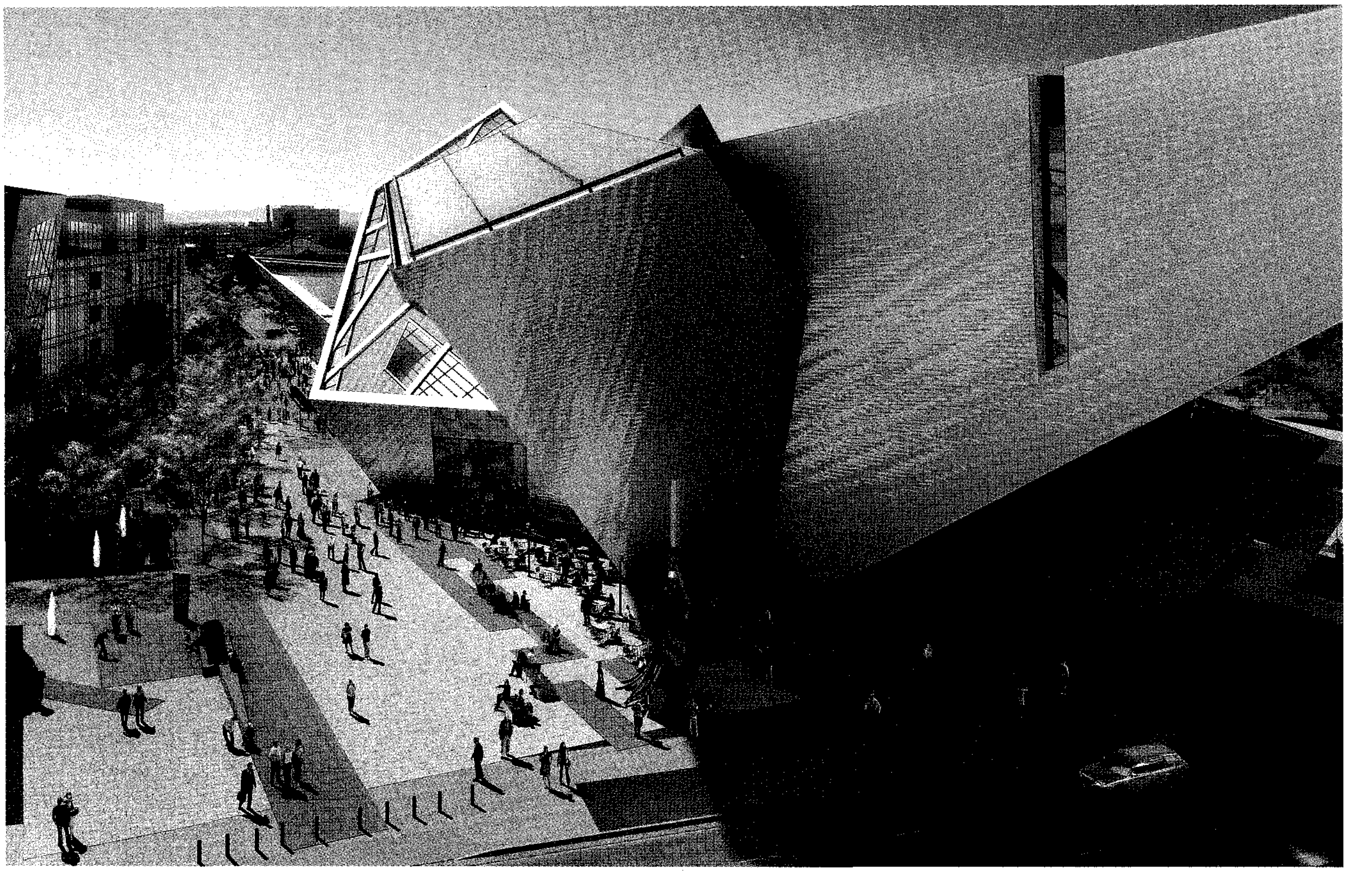
How do you display art in such a building? Not easily, and not entirely successfully, but a lot better than you might expect. Like Frank Lloyd Wright at the Guggenheim, Libeskind has designed a building that never recedes into the background but that is surprisingly sympathetic to certain kinds of art. His angular spaces—in which walls slope inward or outward, many ceilings are raked, and every corner becomes a slanting line—are full of energy, which may be why they work best with big contemporary works. In the largest of the temporary exhibition galleries, the architect's determination to ignore conventional notions of rooms and galleries seems to make common cause with bold, large-scale works by artists like Damien Hirst, Matthew Richie, and Takashi Murakami. Elsewhere, Libeskind's design makes for bizarre challenges: a wall that slopes away, like the side of a pyramid, has been used to display textiles—the effect is winning, if faintly reminiscent of a fashion boutique—and, in another gallery, a huge striped painting by Gene Davis is hung from a wall that slopes the other way. The canvas dangles in space as the wall recedes behind it.

But most of Libeskind's walls are empty, since there really isn't much to be done with them. The task of making surfaces that you can actually hang paintings on has gone, instead, to Daniel Kohl, the museum's installation designer. Kohl has created interior partitions that zig and zag in a way that recalls Libeskind's angles but never directly mimics them; they are often painted in muted colors—plum, yellow, mossy green—to differentiate them from the white of Libeskind's, so that there is no uncertainty about who did what. To the extent that Libeskind's building is workable as a museum, it is Kohl who has made it so.

Much of the building's interior matches the visual drama of the exterior. Libeskind's spectacular atrium contains a characteristically odd version of the traditional grand staircase. His stairs ascend in a jagged, irregular corkscrew, like something out of "The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari." This produces a sense of vertiginous complexity, which is accentuated by the fact that the wall against which the staircase is set slopes away from you. The climactic point of Libeskind's composition comes on the sculpture terraces that are tucked under the prow, where the square forms of a large Donald Judd piece play off perfectly against Libeskind's angles, and the architect's sloping walls create an outdoor room that seems to engage all of downtown Denver. At moments like this, Libeskind's assertiveness comes off not as bombastic but as masterly, and the museum convinces you that complaints about form not following function are beside the point.

But for every one of Libeskind's spaces that feel exultant there is another that is deeply disquieting. Many of the first galleries you see are so awkwardly shaped that they leave you feeling only uneasiness. Does it really make sense to have a gallery with a floor plan that is bent like the letter "L," slanting walls, and a ceiling that is eight feet high at one end and slopes sharply up to thirty-four feet at the other? It's not just that it's hard to show art in here; it isn't pleasant to be in a room like this when it's empty. As for the museum's celebrated collection of art from the American West, unlike the brash contemporary works that thrive in Libeskind's unconventional rooms, these pieces look forlorn and out of place.

In the neighboring condominiums, now nearing completion, Libeskind has reined himself in. The buildings are long and low, and are clearly intended to defer to the museum: the cloisters to Libeskind's cathedral. Almost all the internal walls here run perpendicular to the ground, and the exterior has fairly standard glass-curtain walls, interrupted every so often by trapezoidal projections that look as if a piece of the museum had spun off and lodged there. Libeskind has figured out how to get beyond the standard box without making spaces that feel intractable; the rooms aren't square, but let's just say that you can put furniture into them a lot more easily than you can install paintings in the museum across the way. George Thorn, a developer who worked with the museum and others to erect the condominiums, says that the units that sold most easily were not the ones that offer a distant view of the Rockies, as is usually the case with Denver real estate, but the ones that face the museum. It's easy to see why. Many of these places have big windows that look right into the side of Libeskind's crystalline shards, a mere fifty feet away. Perhaps this view is what Libeskind had in mind all along. From there, the museum no longer feels like a piece of architecture. It is more like an enormous titanium sculpture that was created to decorate your living room. ♦



Libeskind's new building for the Denver Art Museum will eventually be the centerpiece of a whole district designed by him.

RENDERING BY STUDIO DANIEL LIBESKIND AND DAVIS PARTNERSHIP ARCHITECTS

THE ART WORLD

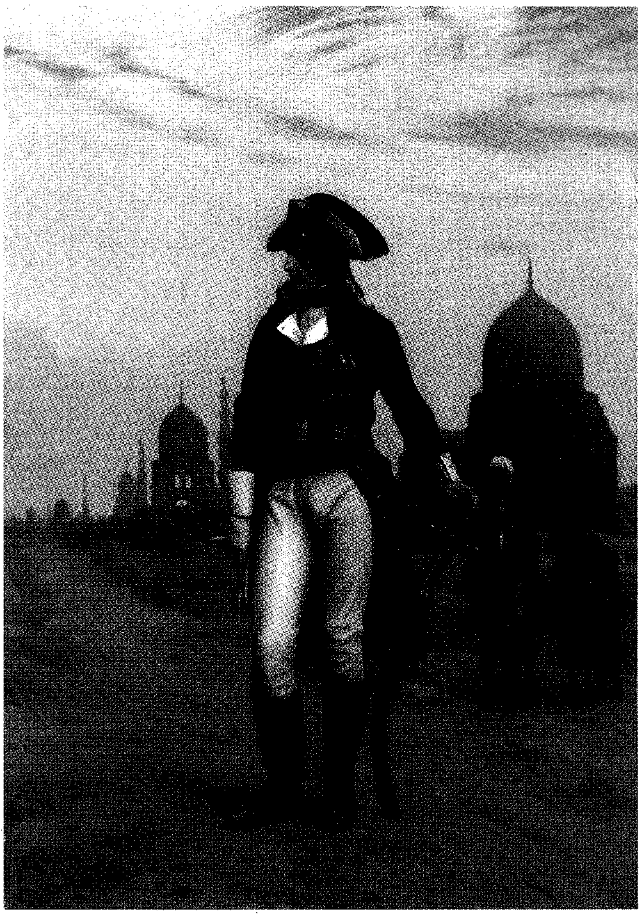
GOING EAST

Napoleon at the Dahesh.

BY PETER SCHJELDAHL

The present sorrows of Beirut call to mind an underknown legacy of that city's last spell of ruin and its history of cosmopolitan ferment—the Dahesh Museum, a sleek institution in the I.B.M. Building, on Madison Avenue at Fifty-seventh Street, which is devoted to mostly nineteenth-century, mostly French academic art. It was envisioned for Beirut in the nineteen-seventies by the Palestinian-born Salim Moussa Achi—also known as Dr. Dahesh, which translates from the Arabic as "Dr. Wonder"—who was an enthusiast for Jean-Léon Gérôme, William Adolphe Bouguereau, Alexandre Cabanel, and other long-devalued Salon heavyweights, casualties of modernism, and who bought masses of art by lesser academics, likely at fire-sale prices. In 1975, as civil war descended, he sold his collection to a Saudi-American family in Connecticut named Zahid. He died during a visit to New York, in 1984, at the age of seventy-five. The Zahids opened the museum, in quarters on Fifth Avenue, in 1995.

The museum's current exhibition has another timely resonance. "Napoleon on the Nile: Soldiers, Artists and the Rediscovery of Egypt" memorializes the disastrous French military occupation of 1798-1801. Bringing along teams of scientists, scholars, and artists, Napoleon's folly reaped material for a twenty-three-volume opus, "Description of Egypt" (1809-1828), characterized by Edward Said, in his book "Orientalism" (1978), as "that great collective appropriation of one culture by another." Culture was all France got. The invasion faltered soon after it began, when Admiral Nelson came upon the French fleet in a sitting-duck formation near Alexandria and briskly obliterated it. French ground forces soldiered on, winning battles against a native insurgency and its Ottoman backers but losing the war. One man in three died. Survivors were returned to France in 1801. (The British seized the gem of the losers' loot: the Rosetta stone.) The campaign had no clear goal. Napoleon cited "glory."



Jean-Léon Gérôme's "Napoleon in Egypt" (1867-68).

COURTESY PRINCETON UNIVERSITY ART MUSEUM

Dr. Dahesh was the reincarnation of Christ. So he said, and Daheshists, once numerous in Lebanon, have believed it, pointing to his hundreds of purported miracles. Daheshism teaches a unity of all religions, a metaphysic of "spiritual fluids," and habitation, with more than six thousand lives for each soul, on planetary heavens and hells, Earth being the least onerous of the hell planets. Daheshists recount that, in 1947, in Azerbaijan, Dahesh was charged with being a spy and executed by firing squad. Back in Lebanon soon afterward, he explained that he had taken the precaution of substituting for his body the apparition of one of his six immortal spiritual avatars. (According to him, Jesus employed the same stratagem on Calvary, actually dying twenty years later.) Today, Daheshism has no official organization. The museum's directors and staff, when asked, have pleaded ignorance of Dr. Wonder's program for the universe. In any event, Dahesh seems not to have knitted his cult with his taste, which reflected a fashion among upper-class Middle Easterners of his time. He has proved prophetic as a collector, if in no other way (though he claimed to have predicted John F. Kennedy's assassination, among other occurrences). Lately, some French academic pictures—like a good deal of British Pre-Raphaelite and Victorian art, thanks largely to the fancies of Andrew Lloyd Webber and other epicurean celebrities—have ascended to respectability at auction, bringing dollar prices in the substantial six figures, with the odd million for a choice Gérôme or Bouguereau.

The modest return of academicism is a sign of our time's spent faith in progress. The storied triumph of Impressionism over the art of the official Salons of late-nineteenth-century Paris has lost its evangelical clout. It can no longer be wielded to chasten people who enjoy the elaborately skilled, archaically styled, formulaic splendors of the old academy, with its devout ancestor worship and deluxe eroticism. Camp—the savoring of unintended ironies—is a factor. Consider Gérôme's quite lovely "Napoleon in Egypt" (circa 1867-68), at the Dahesh: it depicts the soon-to-be emperor in sumptuous uniform, emitting terrific attitude, on a road lined to the horizon with mosques. It amounts to a retroactive "Mission Accomplished," given that Napoleon abandoned his beset soldiers in 1799 to make political hay at home. (How he then spun crushing defeat into inspiring legend may be under study somewhere today.) Of course, there are still those who, unamused, believe that art took a wrong turn when realism was abandoned in favor of unlimited formal and expressive liberties. But that point is moot, because avant-gardism didn't usurp the ground of academic art; popular culture did. Salon audiences became not modernist but only modern, drawn away by the more regularly available satisfactions of photography and magazine illustration. Movies applied the coup de grâce. Modern art arose to invigorate a new, self-selected class impatient with received ideas and unsated by mass fare.

The most seriously appealing works in the Dahesh show are examples of the multitudinous engravings that form most of the volumes of "Description of Egypt." The thousands of artists and artisans who labored, with the aid of Nicolas-Jacques Conté (the inventor of the modern pencil and, just in time for publication, of engraving techniques that were unprecedented in their tonal subtlety), evinced a spirit that was academic in the best sense—dedicated to securing truth. Conventions of the picturesque governed their styles, but the same held for early photography, which soon rendered their medium obsolete. The views of monuments, landscapes, and local society in the show have a virginal quality of first looks, conveying the enchantment of a strange land and its even stranger antiquity. Exceptionally beautiful and moving are the colored engravings of tomb and temple murals and inscriptions, not yet understood but limned with fidelity that borders on mediumistic possession. The French troops disdained the "savants," as the invasion's burdensome intellectual auxiliaries were termed, and the English caricaturist James Gillray brilliantly mocked them. In one cartoon, a cornered savant brains an insurgent with a book entitled "Fraternization Project with Bedouins." But there is something indeed glorious about the savants' selfless passion, though it was in service to a naïve idealism—that of a mission to liberate Egypt from the Mamelukes, the dynastic descendants of slave warriors—that ineluctably turned brutal. Local resistance persisted as external pressures grew. Exasperated by Egyptian ingratitude, a French general proclaimed, in words that sound an eerie echo, "I love those who love us, but I can punish our enemies."

The few Orientalist paintings in the show are a miscellany of later nineteenth-century French, German, British, Italian, and Danish academic work. They convey the romance of exotic otherness that Edward Said anatomized: a colorful Arab, a snake charmer, dreaming ruins. They raise the interesting issue of why a Levantine like Dr. Dahesh would relish European fantasies of the Levant. Was he a postmodernist *avant la lettre*? The Dahesh Museum's scholarly style, from the start, has displayed telling affinities with contemporary theory-speak—as in a rote exposition of "France's self-constructed patriarchal, imperial, and cultural relationship with and appropriation of Egypt." That's by this show's proficient curator, Lisa Small, writing in the catalogue. It sounds disapproving, but I detect a positive fondness for material so congenial to boilerplate analysis. The utter comprehensibility of academic art may be its chief appeal to people who like to feel in control of what things mean. Dahesh, plainly, was such a one, in temperamental key with spirits of academicism then and now. His collecting must have seemed to him a means of accruing vicarious power.

Speaking of reincarnation, the Dahesh has announced that it is seeking a new home, with expanded galleries for its large and growing collection. (For a time, the museum tried to buy 2 Columbus Circle, the former Huntington Hartford Gallery of Modern Art. That would have been symbolically delicious, and it might have prevented the shortsighted current destruction, by renovation for the Museum of Arts and Design, of the one-of-a-kind building.) The institution's philosophical reason for being seems a bit less outlandish year by year, as charms of messianic certainty, whether religious like Dr. Dahesh's or political like Napoleon's, increase their magnetism throughout the world. ♦

THE McLEAN CENTER
AT FERNSIDE
A World-Class Alcohol and Drug Residential Treatment Program in a peaceful, rural setting with exceptional accommodations.
Princeton, MA
www.mclean.harvard.edu • 1.800.906.9531
McLean Hospital is a psychiatric teaching facility of Harvard Medical School, an affiliate of Massachusetts General Hospital and a member of Partners HealthCare.

FREE ASTHMA MANUAL
Coughing? Wheezing? Short of Breath?
These are typical symptoms of asthma.
125 PAGE MANUAL INCLUDES:
• Information on asthma medications
• New treatment options
•Description of types of asthma
•Information on Chronic Cough
215-569-1111 or www.theasthmacenter.org

THE ROOSEVELT RIDE
Board the Metro North train to Poughkeepsie by 11:00 am. The Roosevelt Ride Shuttle will take you to the historic sites and back to catch the 5:30 pm train to NYC. Reservations required. Call (845) 229-5320 or visit
WWW.HISTORICHYDEPARK.ORG

JOHN CHRISTIAN
DESIGNERS & CRAFTSMEN
3 DAY RUSH AVAILABLE!
Anniversary Date
IN ROMAN NUMERALS!
December 11, 1998 = XII XI MCMXCVIII
See Your Date Online!
AVAILABLE IN STERLING, GOLD & PLATINUM
FROM $590 - PRICES SUBJECT TO CHANGE
RINGBOX.COM 1-888-646-6466

LINDEN HILL SCHOOL
Jr. Boarding & day for boys with learning differences
Orton-Gillingham based curriculum
ELL instruction Coeducational summer program
Website: www.lindenhs.org Tel:(866)498-2906
Email:admissions@lindenhs.org Northfield, MA 01360

THINK SMALL.
To find out how small space ads can have a big impact on your business, visit www.newyorkersmallspace.com, or contact Kristi Adams, at 877-843-6967

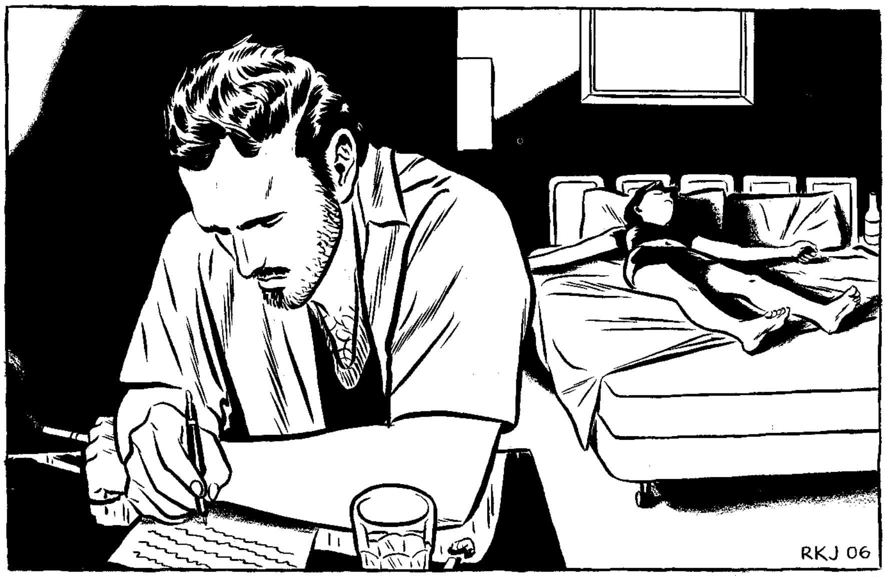
THE CURRENT CINEMA

BORDERLINES

"Factotum" and "This Film Is Not Yet Rated."

BY ANTHONY LANE

Things are going well for Matt Dillon, which is more than you can say for Henry Chinaski. Henry is the man whom Dillon plays in "Factotum." As the title implies, Henry has never been blessed—or burdened—with steady employment. In his eyes, glazed and hooded as they are, a job is something you do to fill the hours until your next drink. Sometimes you can't wait that long; in the opening scenes, Henry, given the task of driving a refrigerated truck for an icemaking company, leaves it outside a bar, with the rear doors hanging open. His boss finds him there, and the job just melts away.



Matt Dillon plays a driftless alcoholic and would-be writer.

R. KIKUO JOHNSON

"Factotum" is delivered with aplomb by the Norwegian director Bent Hamer. Together with Jim Stark, he also wrote the screenplay, which is adapted from the work of Charles Bukowski. "Factotum" the book is a good deal more lurid than "Factotum" the motion picture; Bukowski wrote it in the first person, with his customary compound of the laid-back and the rampant, thus tempting his fans to read it as personal memoir. A fair dose of his prose survives in the script, much of it intoned by Dillon with an exhausted growl, yet Hamer never tries to conjure a visual wildness that might match the roiling temper of his hero, or the sway of his gaze. This strikes me as a wise restraint; the camera cools things down, content to view Chinaski in the third person, and often beating a slow and sober retreat from his array of boozy companions, as if honoring their wish to be left in peace.

Nobody could accuse "Factotum" of catching its fingers in a tangle of too much plot. What we get is a picaresque, though stripped of jauntiness: in short, one damn thing after another. Chinaski slumps in rented rooms and writes stories, none of which, until the closing moments, meet with any success. He works in a pickle factory, a bicycle-parts warehouse, and other busy hives. And he takes up with women like Jan (Lili Taylor) and Laura (Marisa Tomei), sniffing them out within seconds as fellow-drunks; one of the starker revelations of the movie is its view of alcoholics as a Masonic mini-polity, adhering to the codes and charters of despair. As Chinaski says to one employer, claiming his dues for a single day's work, "All I want to do is get my check and get drunk. Now, that might not sound noble, but it's my choice." He leaves the room, whereupon the boss pulls open a desk drawer and lifts a bottle to his lips.

The beautiful joke of "Factotum" is that Dillon is nobility itself. He may also be savage, swiping Taylor off her barstool with a backhand smack, and he is certainly wounded, rising from his bed to throw up and then swig his first beer of the day, yet there is something graven and classical in the brow and bearded chin which speaks of disappointed hauteur; he is like a leftover Roman, beaten up by the places he once aimed to conquer and falling, inch by inch, on his sword. In the words of one onlooker, "You look like you've been around. You look like you've got class." Of all the pretty boys of the nineteen-eighties, Dillon has not just ripened most convincingly; he has discovered that the weatherings of age were exactly what he was waiting for. His racist cop was the best thing in "Crash," and his rescue of Thandie Newton from an upturned car, with the flames crawling closer, has rightly burned a hole in viewers' minds. A sloppy actor would have made the scene redemptive; he would have smiled upon the woman as he dragged her free, and his enfolding hug would have told of lessons learned. Instead, Dillon was aghast, stiffened with something unredeemable, and he clutched at Newton as if he, not she, had been trapped inside the fire.

That is why he makes the perfect stand-in for Bukowski—better, even, than his predecessors, Mickey Rourke in "Barfly" and Ben Gazzara in "Tales of Ordinary Madness." I am still repelled by the sexual aggression of the books, which Bukowski grabbed from the street and worked up into a false poetry ("She took it like it was a knife that was killing her"), but Dillon, backed by the unflappable Hamer, manages to calm such spasms with the tenderness of his regular movements: the painful raising of cigarette to mouth, the scrunching up of his eyes against the day. We speak of drowning our sorrows, but not until I watched Chinaski in his element, taking a seat at a bar as if settling onto the seabed, did I feel the full surge of the phrase. Just as I walked away from "Master and Commander" with rubbery legs, so I awoke the day after "Factotum" with a hangover, all the more shuddering for being imaginary. The film will not cheer you up, but there is no denying the expertise with which it invites you to join the club of the cheerless. As Chinaski informs us, on a betting spree, "The racetrack crowd is the world brought down to size. Life grinding against death, and losing. Nobody wins, finally. We are only seeking a reprieve, a moment out of the glare."

How much of a bare Kevin Bacon should we be allowed to see? Could parts of him be sliced? And how about Selma Blair, braced against the wall in "Storytelling"? Such are the kinds of question raised by a new documentary, "This Film Is Not Yet Rated" (to be released September 1st), which addresses the existence, function, and moral criteria of the Motion Picture Association of America. The movie's director is Kirby Dick, whose name sounds like one of those explicit details to which the M.P.A.A. objects, and his beef is that the ratings board lies somewhere between a cabal and a coven, whose inner workings ought to be unveiled.

The ratings board of the M.P.A.A. was established in 1968 by Jack Valenti, the association's president. (He handed over the job to Dan Glickman two years ago.) Everyone is familiar with the categories into which new releases are herded: G, PG, PG-13, R, and NC-17. Dick concentrates on the last two, and on the blurry border that divides them; this allows him to scrutinize the vexed matter of buttock thrusts, the precise number and visibility of which weigh heavily on raters' minds. There is an interview with Kimberly Peirce, the director of "Boys Don't Cry," which was initially awarded a tag of NC-17—the mark of the beast, as far as distributors and advertisers are concerned. Of the three reasons given for the decision, the most enigmatic was that when Hilary Swank (disguised as a boy) pleasures Chloë Sevigny, the orgasm of the latter goes on too long. To which the reply must be: How long is too long? Does the notion of a slow train coming, as it were, offend the public sense of due process, and, if so, is that public assumed to be largely and nervously male? Was there something more useful, like ironing or car maintenance, which the M.P.A.A. would prefer Ms. Sevigny to have been doing instead of lying back with cheeks aflame?

On the other hand, a serious study of movie classification would not waste so much space on the pedantries of NC-17, however laughable they are. After all, the majority of films lurk in the lower categories, and what tends to exercise parents is the constant, contagious fracas of violence to which their children submit—the unpleasant manner, say, in which the sky-high exploits of "Superman Returns" sink down to the grimy sight of Kevin Spacey kicking our hero in the kidneys. "This Film Is Not Yet Rated" nods briefly at this imbalance, but, like a Michael Moore broadside, it can't stop ducking and darting between dimly related topics, hoping that the sheer momentum of scorn will see it through: we get a section on war films and the Pentagon, a glance at the blacklist, one shot of Will Hays, and so on. In fact, all the complaints registered here have been heard before. Hays, for instance, had worked for the White House, like Valenti, before he arrived on the movie scene, and the overwhelming emphasis of the Hays Code, first presented in 1930, was also on the undesirability of lust—unless you count "dynamiting of trains," which was plainly the deepest taboo.

The problem with the recent spate of liberal-minded documentaries is that, even when their basic contention is right—or because they know it to be right—they tighten helplessly into smugness. Morgan Spurlock's "Super Size Me" was unable to suppress a smirk, and the real fun in "This Film Is Not Yet Rated" comes not from its harrumphing but from Dick's amusement at the anonymity of the ratings board, and from his hiring of a private investigator to expose its secret members. We are asked to deplore, first, the fact that they are ordinary folk (which has always been good enough for a jury), and then the fact that the appeals board, by contrast, is full of industry honchos; how can both complaints hold water? The chief rater, Joan Graves, is even mocked for living in a "nice multimillion-dollar house," as opposed to all those actors and producers in their shabby condos. Still, as the movie shows, the whole furtive business of ratings is indeed ridiculous and should be overhauled: "We cannot allow ourselves to be ruled by a gang of mystery men." Kimberly Peirce? John Waters? Kirby Dick? No, H. G. Wells, a founder of the Film Society, inveighing against the British Board of Film Censors in 1925. *Plus ça change.* ♦

THE NEW YORKER IS A REGISTERED TRADEMARK OF ADVANCE MAGAZINE PUBLISHERS INC., PUBLISHED THROUGH ITS DIVISION THE CONDÉ NAST PUBLICATIONS. COPYRIGHT ©2006 THE CONDÉ NAST PUBLICATIONS. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED. PRINTED IN THE U.S.A.

Volume LXXXII, No. 26, August 28, 2006. The New Yorker (ISSN 0028-792X) is published weekly (except for five combined issues: Jan. 23 & 30, Feb. 13 & 20, July 10 & 17, Aug. 7 & 14, Dec. 25 & Jan. 1) by The Condé Nast Publications, which is a division of Advance Magazine Publishers Inc. PRINCIPAL OFFICE: The Condé Nast Building, 4 Times Square, New York, NY 10036. Louis Cona, vice-president and publisher; Jamie Engel, associate publisher; Alatia Bradley, advertising director; Karen Quinn-Panzer, advertising director; Judy Safir, director of finance and business operations; Daniella Wells, executive director marketing & strategic planning; Janine Silvera, executive director of creative services; Jacqueline Cinguina, director of integrated marketing; Steve Porter, creative director/advertising; Ellen Reid, creative services director; Edward Klaris, general counsel. Advance Magazine Publishers Inc.: S. I. Newhouse, Jr., chairman; Charles H. Townsend, president and C.E.O.; John W. Bellando, executive vice-president and C.O.O.; Jill Bright, executive vice-president–human resources; John Buese, executive vice-president–chief information officer; David Orlin, senior vice-president–strategic sourcing; Robert Bennis, senior vice-president–real estate; Maurie Perl, senior vice-president–chief communications officer. Shared services provided by Advance Magazine Group: Steven T. Florio, Advance Magazine Group vice chairman; David B. Chemidlin, senior vice-president–general manager, shared services center. Periodicals postage paid at New York, NY, and at additional mailing offices. Canada Post Publications Mail Agreement No. 40644503. Canadian Goods and Services Tax Registration No. R123242885. Canada Post return undeliverable Canadian addresses to: P.O. Box 874, Station Main, Markham, ON L3P 8L4.

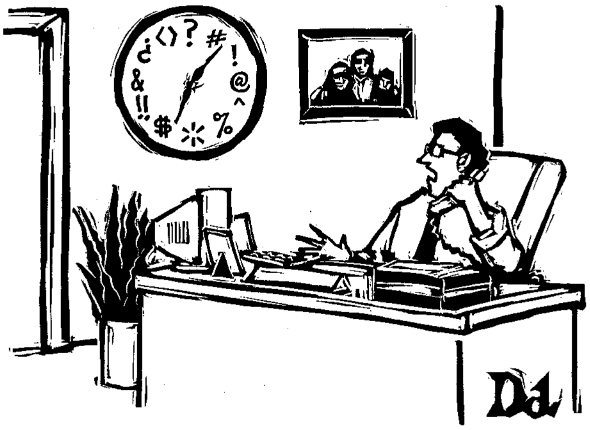
POSTMASTER: SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO THE NEW YORKER, P.O. Box 37684, Boone, IA 50037-0684. FOR SUBSCRIPTIONS, ADDRESS CHANGES, ADJUSTMENTS, OR BACK ISSUE INQUIRIES: Please write to The New Yorker, P.O. Box 37684, Boone, IA 50037-0684; call (800) 825-2510; or e-mail subscriptions@newyorker.com. Four weeks are required for change of address. Please give both new and old address as printed on most recent label. First copy of new subscription will be mailed within four weeks of receipt of order. For advertising inquiries, please call Jamie Engel at (212) 286-5491. For submission guidelines, please refer to our Web site, www.newyorker.com. Address all editorial, business, and production correspondence to The New Yorker, 4 Times Square, New York, NY 10036. For cover reprints, please call (800) 897-8666, or e-mail covers@cartoonbank.com. For Permissions and Reprint requests, please call (212) 286-8349 or fax requests to (212) 286-8628. To receive your issues without scent strips, please e-mail scentfree@newyorker.com. No part of this periodical may be reproduced without the consent of The New Yorker. The New Yorker's name and logo, and the various titles and headings herein, are trademarks of Advance Magazine Publishers Inc. Visit us online: www.newyorker.com. To subscribe to other Condé Nast magazines on the World Wide Web, visit www.condenet.com. Occasionally, we make our subscriber list available to carefully screened companies that offer products and services that we believe would interest our readers. If you do not want to receive these offers and/or information by mail and/or e-mail, please advise us at P.O. Box 37684, Boone, IA 50037-0684 or call (800) 825-2510.

THE NEW YORKER IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE RETURN OR LOSS OF, OR FOR DAMAGE OR ANY OTHER INJURY TO, UNSOLICITED MANUSCRIPTS, UNSOLICITED ART WORK (INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO, DRAWINGS, PHOTOGRAPHS, AND TRANSPARENCIES), OR ANY OTHER UNSOLICITED MATERIALS. THOSE SUBMITTING MANUSCRIPTS, ART WORK, OR OTHER MATERIALS FOR CONSIDERATION SHOULD NOT SEND ORIGINALS, UNLESS SPECIFICALLY REQUESTED TO DO SO BY THE NEW YORKER IN WRITING. MANUSCRIPTS, ART WORK, AND OTHER MATERIALS SUBMITTED MUST BE ACCOMPANIED BY A SELF-ADDRESSED STAMPED ENVELOPE.

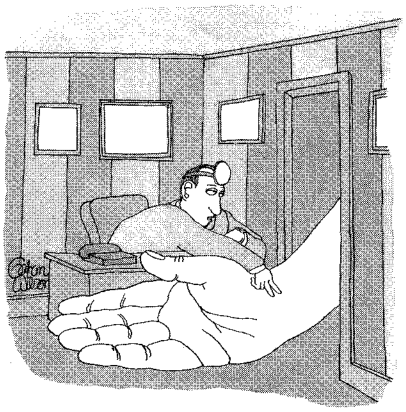
CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by P. C. Vey, must be received by Sunday, August 27th. Finalists in the August 7th & 14th contest appear below; go online to vote. We will announce the winner, along with the finalists in this week's contest, in the September 11th issue. The winner will be given a signed print of the cartoon. Any U.S. resident age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

THE WINNING CAPTION



"The hours here are obscene."
Harry Effron, Briarcliff Manor, N.Y.



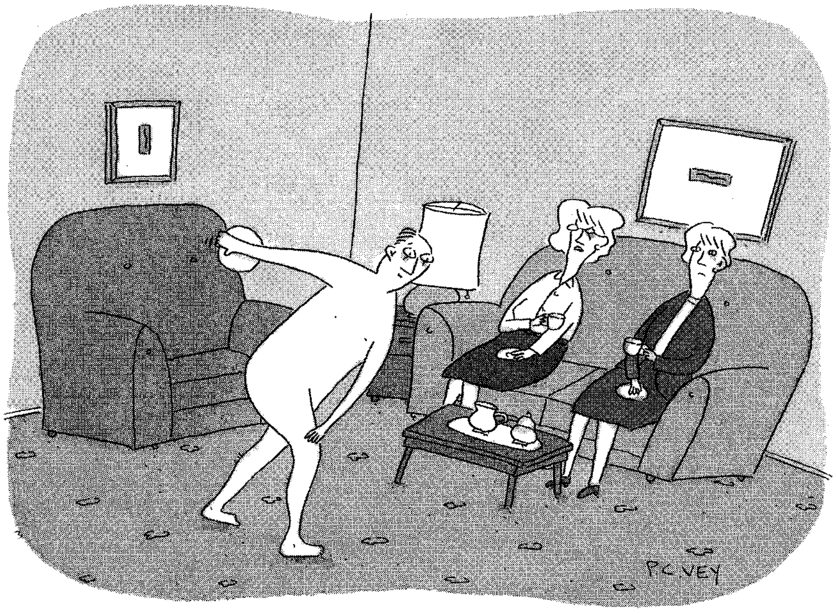
THE FINALISTS

"Really, God, you worry too much."
Frank Toti, Cranston, R.I.

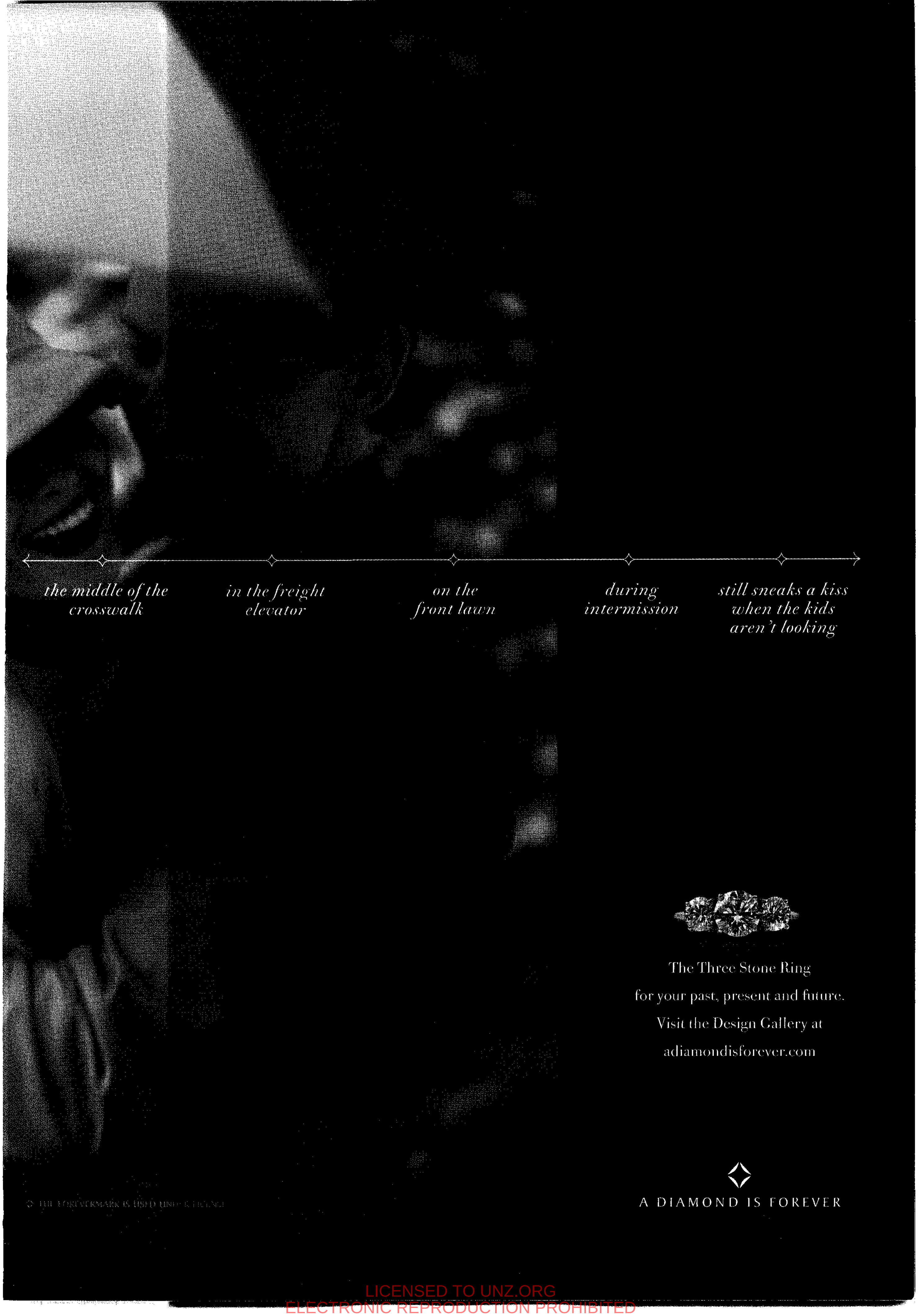
"Take three thousand Tylenol and call me in the morning."
Michelle Haimoff, New York City

"I don't know why you're so jolly—your cholesterol is through the roof."
Chris Thieke, Brooklyn, N.Y.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



“ ”

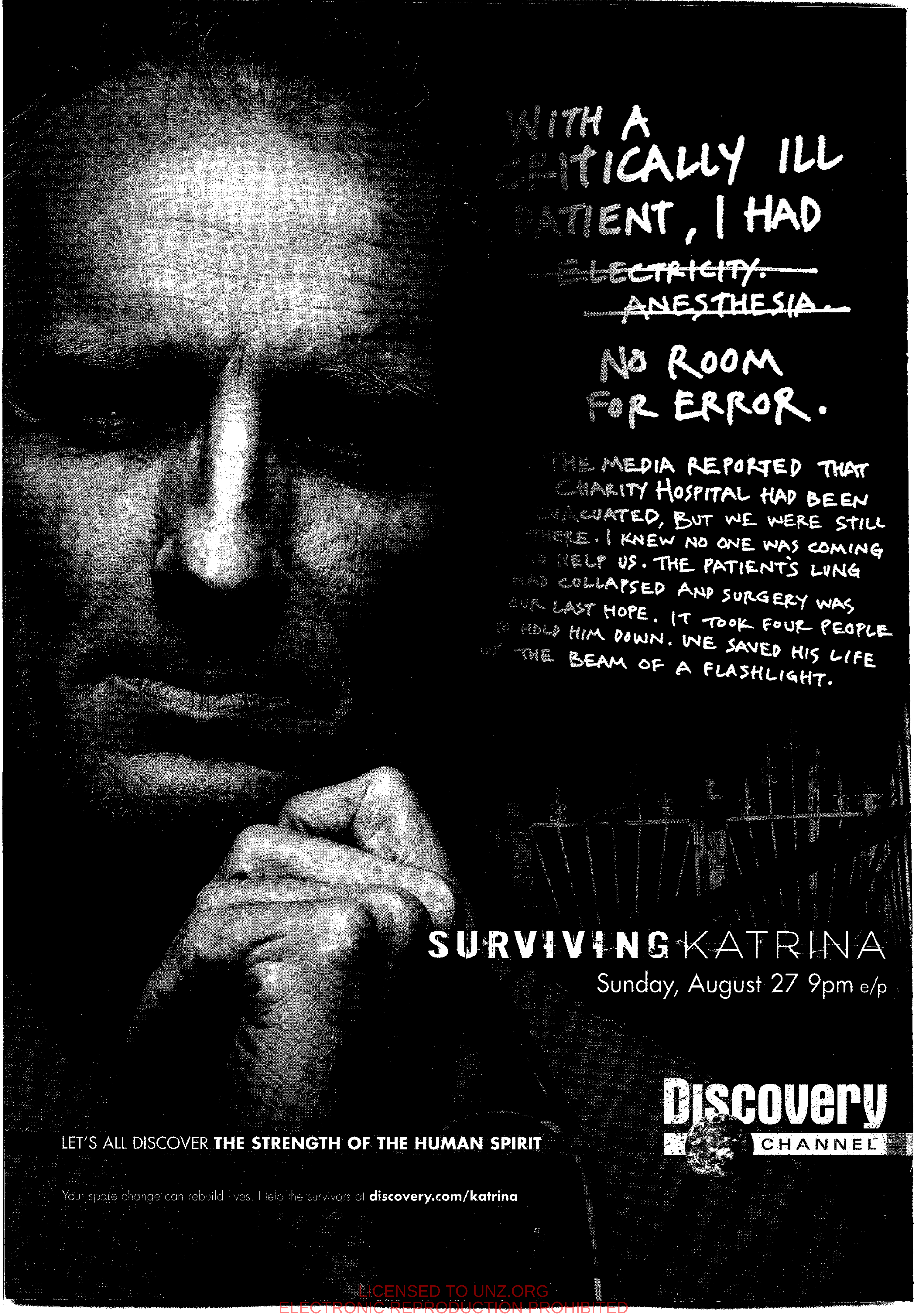


the middle of the crosswalk
in the freight elevator
on the front lawn
during intermission
still sneaks a kiss when the kids aren't looking

The Three Stone Ring
for your past, present and future.
Visit the Design Gallery at
adiamondisforever.com

A DIAMOND IS FOREVER

© THE FOREVERMARK IS USED UNDER LICENCE



WITH A CRITICALLY ILL PATIENT, I HAD ~~ELECTRICITY.~~ ~~ANESTHESIA.~~

NO ROOM FOR ERROR.

THE MEDIA REPORTED THAT CHARITY HOSPITAL HAD BEEN EVACUATED, BUT WE WERE STILL THERE. I KNEW NO ONE WAS COMING TO HELP US. THE PATIENT'S LUNG HAD COLLAPSED AND SURGERY WAS OUR LAST HOPE. IT TOOK FOUR PEOPLE TO HOLD HIM DOWN. WE SAVED HIS LIFE BY THE BEAM OF A FLASHLIGHT.

SURVIVING KATRINA

Sunday, August 27 9pm e/p

Discovery CHANNEL

LET'S ALL DISCOVER **THE STRENGTH OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT**

Your spare change can rebuild lives. Help the survivors at **discovery.com/katrina**